PARALLAX

The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan

The Unnatural World

Rochelle Tobias

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The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan

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The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan

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Rochelle Tobias

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for my parents

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The Discourse of Nature in the Poetry of Paul Celan

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1 *Introduction*

1For all the philosophical intensity of Celan's poetry, the vocabulary in his work remains astonishingly concrete. References to botany, alchemy, cartography, and biology abound in his work. This study traces the presence of three scientific discourses in Celan's texts: geology, astrology, and anatomy—what could also be called the sciences of the earth, the heavens, and the human being. In each case the discourse of nature enables the text to draw attention to its operations not simply as a poem but as an archive of a vanished world. While this world could be given a name, such as the town of Czernowitz, where Celan was born, the poems refrain from citing any location that could be identified on a map. This restraint is not due to any discretion on the part of the poem. Rather it reflects the poem's awareness that a vanished world is one that no longer exists and hence cannot be found anywhere. Here is where science steps in in Celan's work. Geology, astrology, and anatomy all take as their object a body, be it a celestial body, a sedimentary body, an organ, or a limb. Insofar as Celan's poetry draws on each of these disciplines, it draws as well on the notion of the body at play in them. Science, however, is not merely a discourse that the poems invoke, as if its concerns were foreign to them. Rather it is a theory, a way of knowing the world that determines how the poems conceive themselves.

Celan's poetry is undeniably self-reflexive, if this term is taken to mean that his texts consider what makes them possible as they proceed. In other words, they question the basis for their utterances as they are still in the making. Seen in this light self-reflection is not primarily a spatial but a temporal process.

Only *in time* can a poem reflect on its origins or genesis. At the same time a poem can proceed in this manner only if it has space—the space to unfold as this or that entity. This requirement has nothing to do with any priority of space over time. Nor does it have anything to do, at least not principally, with the difficulties of representing time as anything but a movement in space. Space is necessary for self-reflection insofar as reflection occurs in language and language is, if nothing else, a "space" for figures, for the representation of the self as something with contours.

This definition of the self is admittedly vague but nonetheless sufficient to underscore that the self emerges through a process of differentiation in which it is cut from its environment. Distinct from its environment, the self can assume contours. It can appear as something rather than nothing, which is always a threat facing it given its history or origin. In a reading of Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines,* Paul de Man notes, "Entities, in themselves, are neither distinct nor defined. . . . They are mere flux."[1] They first become fixed entities as the subject reflects on them and differentiates them from one another. In so doing the subject defines not only the world but also himself as the basis for a world that is comprehended, that is, a world abstracted from itself.

This process is significant for de Man because it calls the legitimacy of the subject into question. The subject comes to be, as he would have it, through the act of reflection. The individual exists insofar as he or she is reflected in a world that he or she does not find but rather constitutes through language. The circularity of this process is not lost on de Man, who is quick to point out the specular reflexivity of Condillac's model of comprehension. On the one hand, the subject brings the world into being by naming or identifying its elements. On the other, the world affirms the existence of the subject by referring back to him or her as its ground, its basis. De Man thus concludes that the subject "is like" the world not only in its abstract state but also in its diffuseness prior to the act of reflection, which amounts to saying in its nothingness.[2] For a world that is "neither distinct nor defined" cannot be said to exist. Its being depends on its articulation in language, its identification as this or that entity. The world and the subject articulate each other on an alternating basis insofar as each is a figure for the other in language, which is finally the ground the two share.

I summarize de Man's analysis of the subject in Condillac neither to endorse nor to challenge his interpretation but to expose one of the premises of his argument, which is in fact derived from classical rhetoric. De Man treats

the subject and the object in Condillac's treatise as reversible terms, terms that can take the place of each other and hence stand in for each other because they occupy a "place" in language. However self-evident this position may seem, it is based on a conception of language that is pictorial in nature. As Patricia Parker has shown, since Aristotle, if not before, the discourse on metaphor has been dominated by the question of place.[3] Quintilian, for instance, defines metaphor as the transfer of a name "from the *place* where it properly belongs to another where there is either no proper term or the transferred term is better than the literal."[4] What Quintilian calls a "place" is characterized in later treatises as a room and a house, culminating in Dumarsais's definition of metaphor as a word situated in a "borrowed dwelling."[5] Jacques Derrida has commented at length on the metaphors that have determined and driven the discourse on metaphor since antiquity.[6] I do not intend to rehearse his argument here, but I would point out that even a notion as apparently neutral as place carries with it a set of assumptions about language that are perhaps unavoidable, but figurative all the same. A word can be said to occupy a place insofar as language is conceived as a uniform space or expanse, in which terms can switch positions, as if in a game of musical chairs. This metaphor regarding language is central to Celan's verse, which contains innumerable topographies of the earth, the heavens, and the body.

In this book I argue that the metaphor of language as a space enables Celan's poems to represent themselves as if they were physical bodies such as geological sites or astrological formations. In other words, it enables the poems to depict themselves as terrains, with all the features that one associates as much with landscapes as with texts or statements (e.g., depth, density, shape). My purpose in pointing out this metaphor is not to suggest that it can be avoided or even that it is an erroneous designation. As many critics have argued before, it is impossible to say what language is without invoking a metaphor to describe it or lapsing into an endless tautology (i.e., "language is language is language, etc.").[7] My point is that the metaphors a poet chooses for language determine in turn the kinds of claims his texts can make about themselves. Texts can be something besides text, words written on a page, only on the basis of a set of assumptions about language—about what language is and what it can bring about or effect. Celan's poems present themselves with astonishing frequency as landscapes based on the idea that language is an infinitely extending space that can be configured in different ways depending on the text in question.

Despite the theoretical sophistication of Celan scholarship, critics have

generally ignored the metaphors for language that underlie his work. As a result they have routinely confused the poems with the figures they construct to draw attention to themselves as poems, not bodies. Particularly notable in this regard is Peter Szondi, who remains one of Celan's most sensitive readers but whose 1971 essay on the poem "Engführung" (Stretto) inaugurated a critical tradition in which the performative dimensions of Celan's poetry are said to outweigh all other considerations. Szondi insists that Celan's poems instantiate what they say. Put otherwise, they incarnate their own utterances without recourse to, or the interference of, figurative language. With respect to "Engführung" Szondi argues that the poem is literal in the sense that it is identical with the phenomena it names, particularly in its first section:

> Verbracht ins
> Gelände
> mit der untrüglichen Spur:
>
> Gras, auseinandergeschrieben. Die Steine, weiß,
> mit den Schatten der Halme:
> Lies nicht mehr—schau!
> Schau nicht mehr—geh![8]
>
> [Transported into the
> terrain
> with the unmistakable trace:
>
> Grass, written asunder. The stones, white,
> with the shadows of blades of grass:
> Read no more—look!
> Look no more—go!]

Regarding these lines Szondi comments, "The grasses are simultaneously letters and the landscape is a text. Only because the *terrain / with the unmistakable trace* is (also) a text, can the reader be transported there."[9] In the case of this poem Szondi has good reason to identify the depicted landscape with the text. To the extent that the grass is "written asunder," it resembles the letters of the alphabet. The shadows cast by the grass on a stone are likewise reminiscent of the words printed on the page. Yet Szondi insists that the text does not merely resemble what it describes but embodies it. He emphasizes that the text is an instance of what it says in order to argue that it constitutes a reality in its own right: "Poetry is not mimesis. It is no longer representation, but reality. A poetic reality, to be sure, a text, which does not follow the lead of reality, but instead projects itself and establishes itself as the reality in question."[10]

At first glance Szondi would seem to argue that a text becomes a reality when the figures in it refer no longer to a world outside the text but to the text itself as a world in its own right. I believe, however, that the principle at stake for Szondi in Celan's poetry is more extreme. In his opinion the text does not refer to itself; it *is* its very representations, such that the distinction between figure and text or description and inscription no longer has any significance. The text embodies what it says. This becomes apparent in Szondi's reading of the instructions the poem issues in the middle of the first section: "Lies nicht mehr—schau! / Schau nicht mehr—geh!" According to Szondi, the reader fulfills this demand to "go" in continuing to read, since in so doing she contributes to the text's unfolding; she enables it to unfurl in space. Reading and going amount to the same in a text which not only produces itself, but also extends itself with every successive word, as if each word were a step: "The poem reveals itself as a work that is itself a progression, instead of making this movement the subject of a description or representation."[11] One could, of course, take issue with Szondi's conflation of reading and moving on the grounds that if the two were identical, the text would not first exhort the reader to look instead of read and then to go instead of look. Such an objection, however, is superfluous in the present context. Of greater significance is Szondi's insistence that the text is a place in which the reader can wander as if in a field, with various landmarks along the way.

Szondi is not alone in this critical orientation. Uta Werner argues as well that Celan's poems constitute a grave for the victims of the Holocaust, whose ashes were never buried: "This missing site gives rise in Celan's work to the salvaging power of language, which does not merely represent the dead like a gravestone, but which would seem to recreate the dead literally in the world of the text."[12] The text can be such a place—a grave, a world, or a now abandoned death camp—only if one assumes that language is a space that can be arranged in any number of ways, like the space Descartes conceived for geometry. Then, and only then, does the poem become a site, for the simple reason that all poems, as instances of language, are articulations of space, configurations of a uniform expanse.

This understanding of language has fueled many experiments with layout in modern verse, most notably in Mallarmé's "Un coup de dès," whose running motto is, not coincidentally, "Nothing will have taken place but the place." Yet Szondi's primary interest in his reading of "Engführung" is not the poem's organization *in* space but its organization *of* space.[13] To the extent that the poem unfolds as a terrain, it is identical with its utterances. Put otherwise,

it achieves a degree of self-sameness unsurpassed in modern literature. It is on this ground that Werner Hamacher criticizes Szondi's reading of Celan. He concurs with Szondi's insight that Celan "replaced the traditional symbolist poem, which is concerned only with itself and which has itself as its subject-matter, with a poem that is no longer concerned with itself but that is itself,"[14] with the one exception that the poem cannot be itself, that is, an instantiation of its own utterances, insofar as it, like the very phenomena it represents, is subject to time. Time alters whatever it touches. It negates everything finite that exists, such that even what persists does so only in ever-new forms, its old forms having been sentenced to disappearance. Throughout his discussion of Celan's *oeuvre* Hamacher underscores that the poems progress through a process of alteration, a process in which they become something other than themselves, which in turn makes every poem, as he puts it, "the very movement of metaphorization,"[15] that is, a poem that is always replacing and representing itself.

This tendency is evident in the first word of "Engführung," the participle *verbracht* (transported, deported), which indicates a movement toward something other than the self that is not willed but forced. Even before the poem names a destination for this movement, it points to the condition for its pronouncements: being transported into something foreign as well as translated into a foreign idiom. The German word for translation, *übersetzen,* denotes the act of carrying over or across. It is also a translation of the Greek *metaphorein,* as Paul de Man notes in the essay cited above.[16] Celan's poems are translations, metaphors for that which has no proper name. "Sie setz[en] / Wundgelesenes über" (*GW,* 2:24) (They ferry what has been read raw), as Celan writes in one poem in which what is read is not what is written but what is carried in the text. As translations, Celan's poems are condemned to speak of themselves in figures since they have no native tongue. They can refer to themselves only with the aid of images since they have no proper name or idiom. While this situation is not unique to Celan's poetry—no text is written in a private language, to borrow a phrase from Wittgenstein—the way in which his poems deal with the generic nature of their idiom is without precedent in modern literature.[17] Celan's poems do not seek to surmount their displaced condition. For all their emphasis on muteness, they do not attempt to return to their original silence. Rather they aim to amplify their uprooted condition by comparing themselves to landscapes in upheaval. Celan's preferred motifs are natural phenomena in the course of change, such as the site of a vol-

canic eruption or a comet that is about to crash into the earth. In each case the metaphor in question enables the text to draw attention to the rupture that initiates it, a rupture that propels it into language.

In this manner the poems build on the metaphor of language as a space. They compare themselves to phenomena in the course of change in order to trace their genesis after the fact as utterances wrested from their silence and hence themselves. Insofar as the poems are wrested from their silence, they are also submitted to time. Time forms and informs Celan's poems because they do not rest in themselves but in a language that remains alien to them because of its generalizing or universalizing tendencies. Perhaps no poem in Celan's *oeuvre* demonstrates more forcefully the relation of a text's spatial motifs to its time than the lyric "Ein Wurfholz," from the 1963 collection *Die Niemandsrose:*

Ein Wurfholz, auf Atemwegen,
so wanderts, das Flügel-
mächtige, das
Wahre. Auf
Sternen-
bahnen, von Welten-
splittern geküßt, von Zeit-
körnern genarbt, von Zeitstaub, mit-
verwaisend mit euch,
Lapilli, ver-
zwergt, verwinzigt, ver-
nichtet,
verbracht und verworfen,
sich selber der Reim,—
so kommt es
geflogen, so kommts
wieder und heim,
einen Herzschlag, ein Tausendjahr lang
innezuhalten als
einziger Zeiger im Rund,
das eine Seele,
das seine
Seele
beschrieb,
das eine
Seele
beziffert. (*GW,* 1:258)

[A Boomerang, on breath-ways,
so it wanders, the wing-
powered, the
true. On
astral
orbits, by world-
splinters kissed, by time-
kernels grained, by time-dust, co-
orphaned with you,
Lapilli, be-
littled, dwarfed, an-
nihilated,
deported and thrown away,
itself the rhyme,—
thus it comes
flown, thus it comes
back and home,
for a heartbeat, for a millennium,
to pause as
a lone hand on the dial,
which describes
one soul,
its
soul,
which enciphers
it.][18]

In his powerful reading Werner Hamacher contends that the poem should be identified with the projectile it names in its opening verse: "Thrown, a boomerang—this word—is already on its way with the first word of the poem, thus not at home but grasped in the flight of its displacements and transformations."[19] In comparing the poem to its title figure, Hamacher would seem to pursue a strategy similar to Szondi's. The poem is a boomerang, as "Engführung" is a terrain. Each text would seem to materialize as the principal phenomenon represented in it. Yet, as the above-cited statement indicates, Hamacher's interest is not in the thing boomerang but the word, a word, moreover, that stands for the entire poem insofar as it is also the title of the text. The poem can be a boomerang because the boomerang is also a linguistic entity, that is, a reality within language rather than apart from it.

However minimal the difference may seem between the boomerang as a thing and a word, the difference is central to Hamacher's claims about what this

figure does in the text. Its fate, as he sees it, is the fate of language as well—the fate of all language as well as of the language of this one poem, which presumably constitutes an exemplary instance. Insofar as the boomerang is "annihilated" in its flight, it never reaches its intended recipient or target. Put otherwise, it never returns to its outset whole or intact, which is generally the course of such a weapon. How Hamacher accounts for the lines "thus it comes / back and home" is a matter I will address shortly. For the time being, suffice it to say that in the aborted flight of the boomerang, in the failure of this projectile to reach its destination, Hamacher identifies the failure of language ever to arrive at a stable referent and to fulfill its intention. The figure of the boomerang demonstrates the inability of words to secure a meaning apart from themselves, which would make all figures of speech unnecessary, if not impossible. In this manner Hamacher elevates the figure of the boomerang to the status of an emblem. It is a metaphor not only for the poem but also for language, which is always caught "in the flight of its displacements and transformations" because it can never arrive at a fixed meaning—in short, because it can never be literal.

All expression in this regard is translation, a rendering that perpetually errs from the sense of the original, since the original is not, as the Kabbalists would say, in a language known to man.[20] The absence of an original leads to the proliferation of figures in the text. Hamacher calls the principle that directs this proliferation "rhyme" on the basis of the poem's one explicit statement about itself: "itself the rhyme." For Hamacher this line signals how the poem comes home even if it does not come back to itself.[21] Indeed, the latter is the condition for the poem's homecoming as a word and nothing else. Rhyme is first and foremost a circular mechanism. It directs words back to themselves, albeit not as semantic but as phonetic units, whose meaning is secondary at best. It is thus of singular importance for Hamacher that the poem comes home as a rhyme, in particular as the rhyme between the words *Reim* and *heim* in the fourteenth and seventeenth lines of the poem, respectively. On the basis of this purely phonetic circle he is able to maintain that the poem does not arrive at a meaning; it does not return to itself, but only to the sounds from which it started as an echo of itself.[22] The poem comes back to its point of departure as something other than itself, as something "an- / nihilated, / deported and thrown away." It returns to its outset because its meaning is deferred. The deferral of meaning is what propels the poem's circular flight. This is the paradoxical logic of the text, according to Hamacher.

Given Hamacher's emphasis on the boomerang's flight home, it is somewhat puzzling that he ignores what the boomerang does at this station. In his

interpretation this station is but one of many in the boomerang's continual flight. The poem, however, singles out this juncture as one of decisive import:

so kommt es
geflogen, so kommts
wieder und heim,
einen Herzschlag, ein Tausendjahr lang
innezuhalten als
einziger Zeiger im Rund,
das eine Seele,
das seine
Seele
beschrieb,
das eine
Seele
beziffert.

[thus it comes
flown, thus it comes
back and home,
for a heartbeat, for a millennium,
to pause as
a lone hand on the dial,
which describes
one soul,
its
soul,
Sphinx which encrypts
it.]

The rhyme of *Reim* and *heim* gives the poem an occasion to pause for a period that it describes in paradoxical terms as something as short as a heartbeat and as long as a millennium. What links these two is the mortality implied in both. The cessation of the heart implies the cessation of life, as a thousand years recalls the thousand-year Reich, which the National Socialists proclaimed as they embarked on their campaign of genocide.[23] It is in this pause of uncertain duration that the poem rewrites the image that dominated its first seventeen lines. The boomerang, which in the first half of the poem traced a circle from without, is replaced with a hand in the middle of a dial, which is presumably the face of a clock.

With this shift the poem calls into question whether the boomerang ever existed at all or was an illusion created by another instrument not yet named

in the poem. As a tube, when swung quickly, leaves the impression of a circle in the air, so too the movement of the hand of a clock can recall the circular path of a boomerang. The boomerang is to this extent an optical illusion created by the motion of time. More specifically it is a figure created by the movement of a hand that has "come home" and consequently completed its circuit around the dial. In this manner the poem renounces its founding figure and conceit. It exposes the illusory or artificial nature of the instrument it compared itself to by replacing it with another instrument.

This second instrument, however, is no more literal than the first. The idea of time as the motion of a hand is as illusory—metaphoric—as the idea of the hand of a clock as a boomerang. What nonetheless distinguishes the second figure from the first is that the second returns the poem to its author, to the one who pens its verses. The "lone hand" of the poem not only finds itself in the middle of a ring or dial ("ein Rund"); it also draws this very ring in passing through the hours on a clock, as a boomerang passes through various points in its trajectory. This ring, we are told, at once "inscribes" and "encrypts" a soul, which is presumably the soul of the one who writes the text. The most rudimentary condition for the poem's legibility is that someone write it with his or her hand, which is an overt figure in the English translation and an implied one in the original. The German word for the hand of a clock is *Zeiger* (pointer), which is not as anthropomorphic as the English *hand* but still refers to this body part inasmuch as the *Zeiger* recalls and functions as a *Zeigefinger,* an index finger. What the bearer of this hand or finger draws is his or her time—as represented in the figure of a dial, the face of a clock. In "Der Meridian" Celan argues forcefully that what is unique to every mortal being is his or her time.[24] The time allotted someone can never be exchanged, because it can never be represented in language. In poetry the individual nonetheless brings his time to bear on language; he incises his mortality into words and phrases that, to the extent that they endure, would seem to deny his passing. Celan cites Lucile's seemingly formulaic utterance "Long live the King" in Georg Büchner's play *Dantons Tod* to demonstrate what poetry is. With these words, which are themselves banal, Lucile announces her death at the hands of the French Revolution and thus the character or quality of her life. The poem "Ein Wurfholz" is likewise such an act. The circle that the poem traces from both within and without is the figure of a soul exposed to time and the time of a soul as a spatial figure or conceit.

If Hamacher ignores this dimension of the poem, it is to challenge the notion of self-reference. In his interpretation the poem cannot refer to itself, be-

cause it is always changing. It is always becoming something other than itself, or as he puts it, the "rhyme . . . of its an-nihilation."[25] Yet I would argue that "Ein Wurfholz" is concerned precisely with the self not as the meaning of the poem but as its ground, its basis. This ground is at once hidden and manifest, or to borrow from Derrida's essay on Celan, legible in its encryption, which amounts to saying in its figures as crypts, ciphers.[26] For this reason, the poem discards its own conceit of itself as a boomerang bombarded by "time-dust" and "time-kernels." The poem can bring the time of the soul that authors it to light only if it distinguishes itself from its extended metaphors (i.e., a boomerang and a hand), which are spatial entities. These phenomena, it shows, are figures of the text, designed to mark a time that nonetheless remains hidden, encrypted.

Celan's suspicion of images is legendary. In almost every text he condemns a "bebilderte Sprache" (*GW,* 1:213) (an image-laden language), which is deadly precisely because it leads one to forget oneself in one's fragility.[27] And yet his poems abound in images of the earth, the heavens, and the human body. In this book I argue that these images are not opposed to the highly self-reflexive nature of Celan's work. On the contrary, they are part and parcel of it. The poems push the figures they construct to the point of their collapse, so that they may be revealed as conceits that expose in space the poem's vulnerability and exposure to time. Celan is by no means the first writer to take recourse in spatial motifs to explore the vicissitudes of time. Already in the fourth book of his *Physics* Aristotle noted that time could only be represented as a movement in space, such as in the figure of a hand moving around a dial. Yet what is significant for Celan is that these figures can also be unmasked. They can be written as well as unwritten as figures of speech because they are figures for language as a space of infinite proportion. This assumption is not unique to poetry. It also underpins all the natural sciences, which investigate physical bodies that are conceptualized and codified in language. Science, like poetry, must assume that its language is adequate to its object. To constitute a science, it must be able to express the truth of its object even if that object is ultimately spatial, not linguistic. Yet this final condition is also what distinguishes science from poetry, both of which are ways of knowing the world, according to Heidegger.[28] The object of poetry is not spatial but linguistic, which is why poetry is in a unique position to question the premises it borrows from other fields. Celan's poems reflect on the principles they borrow from science as they proceed. They interrogate the principles they posit even as they are still unfolding. In so doing they succeed in generating themselves as figures that

would seem to evolve in space, although time is ultimately their element. Time is the element of Celan's poems because the figures they inscribe do not exist in advance of the text but only as a result of it—as a result of the text's exploration of the conditions that make it possible in the first place. This is the unnatural world of Celan's poetry. It is the world of a text that must reflect on its founding principles to find what is no longer and project what is not yet.

In each of the following chapters I consider the strategies of embodiment at work in Celan's texts. The temporality of these figures varies depending on the scientific discipline at play in them. In Celan's geological poems the concern is with the past, with the ways in which what once was determines the horizon of the future. In the astrological poems, by contrast, the concern is with an eternity that, in spite of its infinite duration, impinges on the present of the poem and allows it, as it were, to live. In the anatomical poems of Celan's late period the present dictates as a period that cannot be linked to a past or a future, since meaning has utterly yielded to matter in these texts. I argue that each of these motifs (geological, astrological, and anatomical) can be identified with different phases of Celan's work. In so doing I attempt to distinguish between the various stages of Celan's work based on immanent textual features rather than on questions of style or genealogical presuppositions.

1 *Earth Science*

Soviel
zu segnende Asche. Soviel
gewonnenes Land. "Chymisch"

So many
ashes to bless. So much
land won. "Alchemical"

"Du bist, / wo dein Aug ist" (*GW,* 1:219) (You are / where your eye is)—these lines from the poem "Zu beiden Händen" (On either hand) represent a rare moment in Celan's work, one in which he names the place of the other as well as identifies the other with the organ of vision. However sparing these lines may be, they nonetheless announce a relation between the other and the eye that has implications for Celan's entire work. The eye in this case is not a part, a metonymy for the other's person. Rather it is the place where the other is, the locus of his or her being. As such a locus, the eye constitutes a ground. It guarantees the existence of the other to the extent that it is visible as a star, perhaps, or a light. For *Aug* is not only a German word designating the eye but also a Greek word for a shimmer or radiance often associated with the eye.[1] Thus in Greek the light that emanates from the sun is referred to as the *deos augei,* the rays of the deity Zeus, who surveys the world from his position in the sky.[2] The poem "Zu beiden Händen" invokes this tradition to the extent that it places the other in the sky. He appears "da / wo die Sterne . . . wuchsen" (there / where the stars . . . grew), as if he were himself a celestial body. And indeed he might be such a body, since all that can be seen of him is his "Aug," his eye, his radiance. His eye illuminates the world so that the world can be seen as a place that extends to a certain point: the point where the other is. The lines "You are / where your eye is" express this dual relation whereby the eye that sees the world is seen by the world as its vanishing point, its limit. What makes the world visible, consequently, as a place with a distinct horizon is an eye that looks at it, and casts light on it, from a distant vantage point.

Among the most frequent motifs in Celan's poetry is that of the eye. From his early to his late poetry the eye consistently appears as a nearly autonomous organ, detached from the body. The poem "Zu beiden Händen" is but one instance in which the eye is placed in the cosmos, where it can look down upon the earth. If this eye looks down, however, it also looks back at a world it left behind in a cloud of smoke. The eye leaves the world in this manner because it is an ember or ash stemming from the ovens of the concentration camps, as the poem "Engführung" hauntingly suggests. In Celan's most famous poem, "Todesfuge" (Death Fugue), which "Engführung" rewrites, the reference to the smoke rising from the crematoria is even more pronounced: "wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng" (*GW,* 1:41) (we dig a grave in the air there you won't be cramped). In her extraordinary study *Textgräber* Uta Werner underscores the persistence of geological motifs throughout Celan's work.[3] Geology is of significance for Celan's poems inasmuch as it is the science of sediment, that is, the science of ash, dust, and sand, which is what remains of the victims of the Holocaust. For Werner, these remains are buried in textual graves that are organized like geological sites with layers corresponding to different ages.

In this chapter I will take a somewhat different approach to the geological motifs in Celan's work, focusing on the ways in which the poems from Celan's middle period embody the remains of the victims rather than embed them through recourse to geology. The figure of the eye is essential for this practice, as it gives the world the semblance of a face after the fact. After the eye has left the world to burn in the sky, what remain are simply scars, "Höhlen am untern Stirnsaum" (*GW,* 1:158) (hollows on the lower seam of the brow), as the poem "Heute und Morgen" puts it. These hollows, representing eye sockets, are simultaneously hollows in the earth, for *Stirn,* as I will discuss, is not only a common noun for a forehead but also a technical term for the top of a mountain. The geological terms invoked in Celan's poetry invariably pertain to the face or, if not the face, the human body, as the term *Büßerschnee* (penitent's snow) in the poem "Weggebeizt" (Etched Away) (*GW,* 2:31) demonstrates. The anthropomorphic dimension of these terms enables the poems to sketch a landscape that not only attests to loss but also gives loss a face.

Refracting Particles

Perhaps no poem underscores more forcefully the events that shape the world's face than the poem "Schliere," from the 1959 collection *Sprachgitter:*

Schliere

Schliere im Aug:
von den Blicken auf halbem
Weg erschautes Verloren.
Wirklichgesponnenes Niemals,
wiedergekehrt.

Wege, halb—und die längsten.

Seelenbeschrittene Fäden,
Glasspur,
rückwärtsgerollt
und nun
vom Augen-Du auf dem steten
Stern über dir
weiß überschleiert.

Schliere im Aug:
daß bewahrt sei
ein durchs Dunkel getragenes Zeichen,
vom Sand (oder Eis?) einer fremden
Zeit für ein fremderes Immer
belebt und als stumm
vibrierender Mitlaut gestimmt. (*GW,* 1:159)

Streaks

Streaks in the eye:
A loss glimpsed mid-
way by gazes lost.
A never, truly spun,
back again.

Pathways, half—and the longest ones.

Threads tread by souls,
A trace of glass,
rolled backwards,
and now
veiled in white
by You-Eyes sitting on
the constant star above you.

Streaks in the eye:
that a sign carried through darkness
may be preserved,

a sign enlivened by sand (or ice?)
of a strange time for an even stranger forever
and tuned to the pitch of an
accompanying sound, silently oscillating.]

The streaks that appear in the eye in this poem have a specific geological precedent, one that Celan in all likelihood encountered in Franz Lotze's *Geologie,* a textbook he is known to have read with some care.[4] The term *Schliere* appears in a discussion of volcanoes that erupt but never reach the earth's surface.[5] The heat produced by volcanic magma, which rises like a column in the earth, melts the surrounding sediment and rock that form the contents of the earth's crust. In cases of extreme heat and pressure the rock melts in vertical streaks, called *Schliere,* which run alongside the volcanic column and stand in marked contrast to it.[6] For magma, when it cools and hardens, forms a massive, crystalline body, whereas the streaks are the residue of rock of a different composition.[7] Nonetheless, insofar as these streaks persist, they attest to a former presence, a particular geological environment that was destroyed as a result of liquification. Lotze thus refers to the streaks as "Fließspuren" (liquid traces).[8] They are traces that survive a process of liquification; indeed one is tempted to say in the context of the Holocaust that they survive a process of liquidation.

This context informs the poem even if it is nowhere mentioned in the text, for the streaks it is concerned with are not a natural phenomenon but an optical one at best. They appear in the eye as the residue or remains of a people who were murdered and whose bodies were burned. In the poem "Engführung" ash is accordingly identified as the one remain that continues to circulate after all other traces of the Holocaust have disappeared or been eradicated. In the fifth section of the poem the speaker commands an ash to enter an eye, whose moistness contrasts sharply with the ash's dryness: "Zum / Aug geh, zum feuchten" (*GW,* 1:199) (Go / to the eye, the moist one). Maria Behre has suggested that these lines are based on a fragment by Democritus, in part because of several other allusions to the Greek thinker in the poem that Celan himself pointed out to the critic Hans Mayer.[9] Democritus is reported to have said that "moist eyes are better than dry ones for seeing,"[10] a statement best explained in connection with several other statements attributed to Democritus regarding vision and sense impressions. Aristotle, for instance, credits Democritus with the idea that the eye is composed of water, which reflects the images of things.[11] The images reflected in the eye, however, are not immaterial figures. On the contrary, they are material effluences that an object gives off, much as a snake molts its skin.[12]

Democritus is perhaps most famous for his position that the universe consists of two things only, atoms and emptiness: "A thing only appears to have color, it only appears to be sweet or bitter. In truth there is nothing but atoms and empty space."[13] The atoms that constitute all matter are identical in every respect (e.g., shape, size, weight, consistency, etc.). What distinguishes things, consequently, is not the quality of their atoms but rather their quantity and configuration. For this reason, the empty space between atoms is as important as the atoms themselves in a thing's constitution. It separates the atoms from one another and sets them in a relation that determines not only a thing's properties but also its receptivity to sensation. For the condition for sensation is the existence of empty spaces, pores, through which a stream of atoms can pass from one body to another. This stream of atoms, more commonly referred to as an efflux, is the image that settles in the eye of the beholder and is reflected in the eye's water. The noted historian of optics Hugo Magnus thus summarizes Democritus's theory of vision in the following terms: "Democritus, like Epicurus, believed that every object emits an efflux [*Ausfluss*] of atoms, which produces an image, which then reaches the eye. These images penetrate the eye and are reflected in the eye's water."[14]

If Magnus omits anything in his account of Democritus's thought, it is only the atomist's deep skepticism about the validity of sense impressions of any sort, be they sight, sound, smell, or taste. Two fragments are noteworthy in this regard. In the first Democritus claims "that we do not really know anything about anything; rather each individual's opinion is based on the [sense images] which flow toward him."[15] In the second, he states, "We do not know anything in truth; we only know what changes depending on the constitution of our body and of the [sense images] which penetrate the body or resist it."[16] Human knowledge for Democritus is a contingent phenomenon based on two circumstances in particular: the composition of the body at any given moment and that of the effluxes that impinge on it. If either of these variables changes, so does the resulting sensation, since sensation is nothing but the chance encounter between bodies that by chance are so configured.

This nexus of circumstances or web of independent variables is called "a never, truly spun" in the poem "Schliere." Sensation is "truly spun" insofar as it is woven from factors that can be neither anticipated nor repeated in the future. For this same reason, however, it also constitutes a "Niemals," a never. The factors that contribute to sensation can never be verified, as they are all in a continuous process of change. And yet it is precisely this "never," this happenstance, that in Celan's poem happens again: "A never, truly spun, / back

again." It recurs because the effluences that settle in the eye have no living bearer. In the absence of such a source, these effluences can only be said to return; they return to the world of the living from the world of the dead. The streaks that appear in the eye in this poem represent such a return: the return of a liquidated people who all but vanished without a trace. In the one trace they leave, they nonetheless reveal the cause of their death. Efflux, *Ausfluß,* stream are all liquid formations, whose liquidity is, I believe, captured in the poem in the terms "Schliere" and "Glasspur." Glass is one of only a few naturally occurring liquid crystals.[17] If left in a vertical position, it flows downward in streaks. Hence the poem's formulation: "Trace of glass, / rolled backwards."

This movement is to some extent represented in the text insofar as it progresses down the page toward its final verse. What interests me, however, is less the poem's reference to itself than its reference to an eye that cannot be attached to anyone, as it does not see in any proper sense. Rather this eye is seen throughout the poem as a venue for something else. It serves as the staging ground for a sight that is in the process of disappearing from the poem's outset:

> Schliere im Aug:
> von den Blicken auf halbem
> Weg erschautes Verloren.
> Wirklichgesponnenes Niemals,
> wiedergekehrt.
>
> Wege, halb—und die längsten.
>
> [Streaks in the eye:
> a loss glimpsed mid-
> way by gazes lost.
> A never, truly spun,
> back again.
>
> Pathways, half—and the longest ones.]

The dominant motif in these first two stanzas is that of a movement that is under way. The streaks after which the poem takes its title appear "auf halbem / Weg." This position is nonetheless a relative one to the extent that it does not reflect the streaks' position in space but in the visual field. They are *seen* "midway," or "auf halbem / Weg," in a plane framed on either side by an eye that looks out at the streaks. The first of these two eyes is represented in the text. It is the eye introduced in the opening line, which serves as the background for the remainder of the work. In order for this eye to serve as a background, how-

ever, it must be mirrored in something else. It can only glimpse the streaks if they are reflected in another eye: the eye of the reader.

The eye of the reader first brings the streaks to the foreground in looking at the text from the reverse side of the eye represented in the opening verse. This dynamic is not unique to "Schliere." It also informs the poem "Sprachgitter" (Speech Grille), which draws attention to the grid, bars or marks that make up the poem, by stationing them in front of an eye that looks into as well as out of the text: "Augenrund zwischen den Stäben" (*GW,* 1:167) (Orb of the eye between the bars). Similarly, in "Schliere," the eye of the reader peers into the poem and, by extension, into its one eye, since the streaks that appear there are finally the lines of the poem. The title conflates the poem's ostensible subject, streaks, with its verses or lines. As a result, the eye looking into the text sees the same sight as does the eye looking out from it: each sees the streaks that have formed in the other eye.

For this reason, the first image of the poem is necessarily a frozen image, even if what follows it would appear to be a movement. "Schliere im Aug," the image, establishes the grounds for this text. It places the streaks between two eyes, one gazing into and one gazing out of the text. As soon as the poem turns to the streaks, however, this balance is called into question. The streaks undermine the certainty that there are two eyes by clouding each eye's vision of the other.

In addition to their geological significance, streaks are more generally conceived as instances of refracted light, that is, light that is bent or in German "broken" (*gebrochen*).[18] Light refracts as it passes through mediums of differing density, for example, from air to water or from water to another kind of liquid. In each case the refraction of light produces a spectrum of colors, colors that are already contained within light as differing wavelengths but do not become apparent until light is refracted. The most striking instance of this phenomenon is the rainbow, which is caused by moisture in the air refracting the light that falls on it. Similarly, particles of dust on glass can refract light, producing colored lines, or what are more commonly called "streaks." In an early draft of the poem, Celan accordingly assigned the streaks a color; there they are called "grüne Schliere" (*TA SG,* 26) (green streaks), which is not insignificant given that green is an eye color. If the later version of the poem omits this description, it is not necessarily to deny that the streaks have a color but rather to distinguish them from any internal properties of the eye, such as pigment cells in the iris. Streaks are caused by foreign bodies or matter—atoms, in Democritus's terms, or indivisible particles. These atoms are not vis-

ible in and of themselves but only in light as the refraction of light, that is, as an optical effect. For this reason phenomena like streaks lead the eye astray. They are an effect without any apparent cause, an appearance that is not based in any object. Indeed, they appear out of nowhere and disappear into nothing, as if they never existed.

In the poem's lexicon the streaks constitute a "Verloren" (a lost), a term the poem invents, although it is clearly modeled on *das Verlorene* (something lost), which is the more conventional nominalization of the participle. In contrast to *das Verlorene,* however, "[das] Verloren" does not refer to any object. If anything, it is the condition of being lost, the state of having no proper place. This condition pertains as much to the streaks as it does to the glances (*Blicke*) cast in their direction, since the streaks, according to the second and third lines, are "von den Blicken . . . verloren" which is similar to, but not identical with, the expression *aus dem Blick verloren* (lost from view). The latter indicates that something has fallen out of sight, while the former indicates that the gazes lose something, that a portion of each gaze falls by the wayside.

What the gazes lose is precisely themselves in the process of looking at the streaks located in the middle of the visual field. As soon as the gazes catch sight of the streaks, they lose their way, since what they find there does not exist save as a visual impression. In other words, since what they find there is an illusion with no objective base, they lose the very thing they aimed for the closer they get to it. For this reason the paths leading to the streaks are at once half-paths and the longest ones: "Pathways, half—and the longest ones." They are paths that break off in the middle, where the streaks supposedly reside, and consequently can never be completed, like the longest paths.

The poem marks the place where this break occurs at least twice: first in the division of the phrase "auf halbem Weg" between two lines and then in the dash that divides the second stanza. The dash reiterates at the linguistic level the function of the streaks at a visual one. It divides the line into two parts, as the streaks divide the visual field into two sides. Moreover, in its form it resembles the poem's subject: a streak, scratch, or line. Finally, insofar as the dash is a mark but not a word, a sign that is written but does not have a sound, it has the same liminal status as the streaks, which are a vision but not an object.

For all these similarities, there nonetheless remains a difference between the poem's orthographic signs and its subject matter, streaks. The dash marks the spot where the streaks would be were the text a transparent surface or a diaphanous film. In other words, were the text written on glass or in an eye, the dash could perhaps be a colored streak rather than a black mark on a white

surface. But to the extent that the poem is written on paper, it is condemned to be opaque. It can neither refract light, as do particles of dust, nor let light pass through it, as does air. For this reason the poem turns in its final stanza to another kind of sediment, one that circulates not in the air but in words as a "stumm / vibrierender Mitlaut" (silently / vibrating sound). The dash in the second stanza prepares the way for this turn from the visual to the verbal, from a refraction of light to a refraction of meaning. In keeping with the argument advanced in the introduction, one could say that the poem abandons its spatial conceit to underscore its character as poem, composed of words that are murky rather than clear.

Reverberations

The third stanza outlines the disappearance of the effect that had drawn the attention of the eyes looking into and out of the text. The streaks that appeared in the eye are "weiß überschleiert" (veiled in white), which could signify their disappearance in the white of the eye or behind the eyelid or even in the white light emitted by the sun. If the third possibility seems more likely, it is because of the emphasis in the third stanza on the vertical axis constituted by the streaks, as opposed to the horizontal axis figured in the dash. The streaks are called "Seelenbeschrittene Fäden" (threads tread by souls), which would suggest that they are a trail leading upwards, perhaps to the heavens. The second image, "Glasspur, / rückwärtsgerollt" (Traces of glass, / rolled backwards), underscores in the reverse the downward movement of the streaks, perhaps to the underworld. Finally, the reference to the figure of "Augen-Du auf dem steten / Stern" (You-Eyes atop the constant / star) points to an extreme in the sky that has its counterpole in the earth, perhaps deep in the earth's crust. If the first stanza emphasizes the position of the streaks between two eyes, then the third emphasizes their position between two worlds, one above and one below. But of greater importance in this stanza than the streaks' intermediary position is their mediating function as a footpath or a bridge. The third stanza does not merely take the horizontal axis of the first stanza and transform it into a vertical one; it takes a chasm, a gulf that had separated two eyes, and turns it into a chiasm, a crossing point, between two worlds. It was in this context that an early draft of the poem invoked the figure of the rainbow, which is itself an instance of refracted light, like the streaks after which the poem takes its title.

In the earlier draft the disappearance of the streaks is formulated as "[das] Sterben der Iris" (*TA SG,* 26) (the dying of the iris). The iris, as I have indi-

cated, is the organ that gives the eye its color; in German it is also called *die Regenbogenhaut,* which is a direct translation of the Greek word *iris,* meaning "rainbow." But Iris is also a proper name, the name of the Greek goddess who served as a messenger between mortals and immortals, most notably in Homer's *Iliad.* Indeed in that text she is enlisted to urge King Priam to ask Achilles for the return of his son, whom Achilles has murdered in battle. And in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* she is likewise called on to alert Queen Alcyone to the death of her husband at sea, where his body was engulfed.[19] In each case, Iris is called on to report a death in which there is no corpse, either because it is held in a foreign land or because it has been lost at sea. What she communicates consequently takes the place of a corpse. Or rather her communication takes the place of a body as a metaphor for it. Because there is no body, Iris can announce the death of a loved one only by way of a metaphor. In antiquity this metaphor was usually a rainbow, as her name already implies. And I would argue that in this poem she appears in this form again: as a rainbow in the eye. But in this text, unlike in the classical ones, the rainbow does not replace a missing body. Rather it is what remains of the victims of the Holocaust as seen in the light of the sun.

The third stanza of the poem thus emphasizes the material elements that generate the illusion of streaks:

> Seelenbeschrittene Fäden,
> Glasspur,
> rückwärtsgerollt.
>
> [Threads tread by souls,
> a trace of glass,
> rolled backwards.]

The figure of threads is a recurrent motif in Celan's work, usually in association with light, as in the poem "Fadensonnen" (Thread Suns). There the rays of the sun are represented as the strings of an instrument played by a "tree-high thought," a lofty consideration:

> Fadensonnen
> über der grauschwarzen Ödnis.
> Ein baum-
> hoher Gedanke
> greift sich den Lichtton: es sind
> noch Lieder zu singen jenseits
> der Menschen. (*GW,* 2:26)

> [Thread Suns
> above the grey-black wilderness
> A tree-
> high thought
> tunes in to light's pitch: there are
> still songs to be sung on the other side
> of mankind.][20]

In "Schliere" the rays of the sun (or another star) are likewise figured as threads, but there the rays are coupled with souls in an apparent play on Democritus's philosophy. Democritus divided his particles, or atoms, into two categories: those called "soul" and those called "matter." To illustrate the nature of the soul, he pointed to the example of dust particles rising in the air as reported by Aristotle in *De Anima:* "This is what lead Democritus to say that soul is a sort of fire or hot substance; his 'forms' or atoms are infinite in number; those which are spherical he calls fire and soul, and compares them to the motes in the air which we see in shafts of light coming through windows."[21] If the atoms of the soul can be compared to "motes in the air," it is because these particles are seen in motion, which for Democritus was something only the soul could initiate. What the sight of dust particles illustrates is a mobility unique to the atoms of the soul as opposed to the atoms that constitute matter. In Celan's poem it is precisely these fine particles—souls (*Seelen*)—that are seen climbing "threads," a figure much like Aristotle's "shafts of light" for something that has no literal expression. Light is neither a shaft nor a thread. It first assumes these forms when refracted, that is, when it encounters sediment. Then, and only then, does it appear as something—as a thread "truly spun" or a "trace of glass / rolled backwards." The one additional condition for this appearance is the presence of a medium through which light can pass with relatively little resistance. In the figure of the "trace of glass," the poem names its ostensible medium: the eye, whose vitreous humor is called *der Glaskörper* (the glass body) in German. Although this humor is usually hidden behind the lens of the eye, in this case it comes to the foreground as a trace "rolled backwards." In other words, it appears there as a thin stream that has trickled to the front of the eye and provides a means for souls to depart.

This departure is to some extent under way from the outset of the text, but it is only in the third stanza that it is completed and the streaks vanish from the eye forever. The phrase "und nun" (and now) in the middle of the poem—that is, in the tenth of its twenty lines—interrupts what has been the dominant temporality of the text up to this point: the time of a "Niemals" (never),

which is also the time of time's suspension. In other words, the poem up to this point was suspended *in medias res,* as indicated by the sheer number of past participles in the poem in lieu of a verb.[22] The past participle is the time of the "has been." It designates an action completed in the past that persists up to the present as an effect. Thus, for instance, "threads tread by souls" are threads that have been tread on in the past but are still visible as such in the present. With the arrival of the moment "nun," however, this effect disappears, since "nun" is also the moment of a blinding light, indeed what some have called a mystical moment.

If this moment is mystical, it is because it involves a third party, someone whom the poem calls "Augen-Du" and who is situated in the sky above the text:

> und nun
> vom Augen-Du auf dem steten
> Stern über dir
> weiß überschleiert.
>
> [and now
> veiled in white
> by You-Eyes sitting on
> the constant star above you.]

However elliptical the name "Augen-Du" may seem, it is based on a simple reversal of syllables that is then reiterated in the reversal of letters in "Schliere" (streaks) to form *Schleier* (veil) in the verb "überschleiern" (to veil over) at the end of the stanza. "Augen-Du" stands for *das Du der Augen,* the addressee of the poem's two eyes. In other words, he or she is the embodiment of the countless souls that had circulated in the eye. As these souls strode upwards, they refracted light, producing the illusion of streaks, which had been the ostensible subject of the poem. Once the souls, however, reach the "constant / star" above the eye, the illusion they created is dispelled and replaced with a white veil.

This white veil is simultaneously the white page behind the text, which comes to the foreground with the disappearance of the streaks. The loss of this one illusion brings the page to the fore since the poem had made its background an explicit theme, claiming to appear in the eye. Once the streaks disappear, however, so too does the eye as the ostensible background for "Schliere," the text as well as the visual phenomenon. Both the streaks and the eye retreat behind the page, which is unveiled at this moment as the vehicle that had supported the fiction of "streaks in the eye," indeed that had veiled itself as such. *Überschleierung* (veiling over) is in this respect *Entschleierung*

(unveiling), an unveiling of the conceit of the poem, which had represented itself as a medium for the refraction of light, in short, as something it was not. In the final stanza the poem thus returns to its opening line to justify it as a figure for the text, a metaphor for its own operations:

> Schliere im Aug:
> daß bewahrt sei
> ein durchs Dunkel getragenes Zeichen,
> vom Sand (oder Eis?) einer fremden
> Zeit für ein fremderes Immer
> belebt und als stumm
> vibrierender Mitlaut gestimmt.
>
> [Streaks in the eye:
> that a sign carried through darkness
> may be preserved,
> a sign enlivened by sand (or ice?)
> of a strange time for an even stranger forever
> and tuned to the pitch of an
> accompanying sound, silently oscillating.]

The line "Schliere im Aug" stands as an abbreviation for the entire text, which the poem cites to explain it in the next instance. If the poem, according to this stanza, has a purpose, it is to preserve "ein durchs Dunkel getragenes Zeichen" (a sign carried through darkness), which at first would seem to define the poem in visual terms again as a play of light and darkness.[23] As the poem turns to the element that enlivens this sign, however, it is drawn to a particle that has no equivalent in physics or optics. This sign is said to be enlivened "vom Sand (oder Eis?) einer fremden / Zeit" (by sand (or ice?) of a strange / time) in a curious formulation in which the poem questions its own assertion or places it in doubt. And indeed it must, since what animates this sign is not a physical substance but a "Mitlaut" (an accompanying sound), which echoes in a particular context. The poem creates this context in its parenthetical remark, where it identifies one of the deadliest elements of all, ice, as the force that possibly animates this sign. If ice has the power to animate, it is because it is more than simply ice ("Eis"). It is also a rearrangement of the letters in the word "sei," which is the one verb of the text, or what in traditional German grammar books was called a *Zeitwort.* It is this embedded word—the imperative form of the verb *to be*—in the word "Eis" that gives this apparently univocal term a second meaning, indeed enlivens it.

For this to happen, though, for ice to reverberate with its opposite, there must be a reader, who serves as a medium for this effect and in so doing embodies it. The poem indicates as much in its final verses, where it describes the "sign carried through darkness" as a "stumm / vibrierender Mitlaut." A *Mitlaut* is not only an "accompanying sound," as I have translated it thus far; it is also a technical term for a consonant in a now antiquated system of classification.[24] The technical term underscores the heavy consonance in the last four lines based on the letter *m* in "Immer," "stumm," "gestimmt," and finally "Mitlaut." To read these lines, the reader must press his or her lips, thereby reproducing the "stumm / vibrierender Mitlaut" he or she reads of, indeed embodying it. It is for the sake of this embodiment that the poem "Schliere" is written. It carries a sign it cannot contain in the hope that it will find a voice or mouth elsewhere.

The Sedimentary Cycle

The passage in "Schliere" from the eye to the mouth is reiterated in the poem "Heute und Morgen," with one significant difference. In this poem there are no eyes, only hollows where eyes once nested in what is simultaneously a human face and the face of a mountain:

Heute und Morgen

So steh ich, steinern, zur
Ferne, in die ich dich führte:

Von Flugsand
ausgewaschen die beiden
Höhlen am untern Stirnsaum.
Eräugtes
Dunkel darin.

Durchpocht
von schweigsam geschwungenen Hämmern
die Stelle,
wo mich das Flügelaug streifte.

Dahinter,
ausgespart in der Wand,
die Stufe,
drauf das Erinnerte hockt.

Hierher
sickert, von Nächten beschenkt,
eine Stimme,
aus der du den Trunk schöpfst. (*GW,* 1:158)

[*Today and Tomorrow*

Thus I stand, hard as stone, facing
the distance into which I led you:

The two hollows on the lower seam of the brow
washed out
by wind-swept sand.
Darkness
spied in it.

Beaten through
by silently swung hammers
the spot
where the winged eye brushed me.

Behind that,
set apart in the wall
the level
where something remembered squats.

From here
a voice
trickles, a gift of the night,
out of which you make a drink.]

"Heute und Morgen" is unusual among Celan's poems for the simplicity of its conceit. The speaker likens himself to a stone so that he may weather the elements. In this manner he establishes a relationship with the addressee. He is the rock that the other etches, the stone that the other erodes as sand swept by the wind. The organizing principle of this conceit is that like attracts like, a principle first articulated by Empedocles as part of his more general theory of the four elements.[25] Insofar as the speaker stands firm, like a stone, he is able to face the other, whom he has set in the distance and who returns to him as sand. Facing the other, however, he simultaneously loses his face, or rather, he loses one as he acquires another, a face sculpted by the addressee. For the addressee is the one who has the active hand in the poem, who shapes the speaker after his or her image, rather than the reverse. It is for the sake of this

reversal that the speaker relies on the metaphor of stone, a metaphor that makes him into the mouthpiece for a voice that is not his own.

This voice emerges in the final stanza as a stream that trickles into the sea in an apparent play on the term *Mündung* (mouth of a river). Before the poem can reach this point, however, it must travel to the source of this simultaneous voice and stream, which issues from solid rock. The source of this flow is said to be "something remembered" (das Erinnerte) that "squats" (hockt) in a formulation which recalls the *Hockergräber,* the prehistoric graves in which the dead were buried in a seated position. Although the poem does not refer to a grave, it intimates the presence of one insofar as it places the memory of something in a cave deep within a rock.

In his influential study *Psyche* Erwin Rohde claims that the Greek lay public imagined the underworld as a cave with two competing sources of water: the fountain of Lethe and that of Mnemosyne. If the former enables the departed to forget the torments of life, the latter restores their memory and in so doing returns them to life. Rohde thus concludes that the fountain of Mnemosyne is the fountain of life, which according to the sources he cites "speaks" as it flows from cliffs, or put otherwise, is the voice of silent rock.[26] Celan's poem at once invokes this tradition and also places it in a larger philosophical context, specifically, that of the exchange of elements, whereby air becomes water; water, earth; earth, water; and so on in a continuous cycle. Heraclitus, for instance, states, "For souls, it is death to become water, for water death to become earth. But from earth comes water and from water soul."[27] The chain of becoming which Heraclitus outlines here is virtually identical with what in geology is known as the sedimentary cycle, according to which matter changes, but never disappears. The poem "Heute und Morgen," I would argue, is based on this principle. Stone turns to water, as water turns to stone. Each gives way to the other in a process in which change represents continuity.

The poem does not sketch this cycle in full but intimates what its continuation would be in the final stanza, where it once again introduces the addressee. The addressee is said to "drink" the voice that emerges from the speaker's mouth just as the sea could be said to "drink" water from a river's mouth. Through this analogy the poem is able to link its conclusion with its outset, since the sea is not only a destination for rivers but also an additional means of transport. The sediment contained in rivers is carried by the sea to distant shores, from which it then returns as "wind-swept sand," which etches

and erodes rock so that it may absorb water. Seen in this light, the poem's end is a beginning, just as its beginning is simultaneously an end, the end of a previous phase of this process, which recycles itself continually.

In this regard the poem differs considerably from its most immediate literary precedent, the tenth elegy of Rilke's *Duino Elegies.* There a dead youth is led by a personified Lament through a valley of suffering that resembles the "valley of the shadow of death" in Psalm 23. He encounters the ruins of previous civilizations, all of which had rituals for mourning the dead that have been lost in the industrial age. Among the ruins the dead youth comes across is the face of the Sphinx, which is wind swept and bereft of eyes, like the mountain face in Celan's text:

> Abends führte sie [die Klage] ihn hin zu den Gräbern der Alten
> aus dem Klage-Geschlecht, den Sibyllen und Warn-Herrn.
> Naht aber Nacht, so wandeln sie leiser, und bald
> mondets empor, das über Alles
> wachende Grab-Mal. Brüderlich jenem am Nil,
> der erhabene Sphinx—: der verschwiegenen Kammer
> Antlitz.
> Und sie staunen dem krönlichen Haupt, das für immer,
> schweigend, der Menschen Gesicht
> auf die Waage der Sterne gelegt.
>
> [At evening she [Lament] takes him out to the graves of the elders
> of the race of Lamentation, the sibyls and prophets.
> But when night falls, they walk more softly, and soon,
> the sepulcher that overwatches all,
> moons upward. Brother to him on the Nile,
> the exalted Sphinx: the face of the secret chamber.
> And they marvel at the royal head, that forever
> silently laid the features of man
> on the scales of the stars.][28]

As in Celan's poem, the face of the Sphinx is simultaneously the front of a grave, although this time the grave below is said to correspond to a grave up above that has the moon as its frontispiece or emblem. Both the moon and the Sphinx serve as visible gates to invisible and secret realms. Both mark a limit between life and death, which is a chronic concern of the *Duino Elegies.* Throughout the work Rilke bemoans the limit that humans introduce into a world, which would be unified were it not for the human desire to know the world based on what is present or manifest. This limit divides not only the liv-

ing from the dead but also the natural from the supernatural and all things fleeting from forces eternal. In the tenth elegy, however, this split is momentarily overcome as an owl suddenly appears from behind the Sphinx's crown and brushes the cheek of this monument:

> Nicht erfaßt es sein Blick, im Frühtod
> schwindelnd. Aber ihr [der Klage] Schaun
> hinter dem Pschent-Rand hervor, scheucht es die Eule. Und sie,
> streifend im langsamen Abstrich die Wange entlang,
> jene der reifesten Rundung,
> zeichnet weich in das neue
> Totengehör, über ein doppelt
> aufgeschlagenes Blatt, den unbeschreiblichen Umriß.
>
> [Dizzy from just having died, his sight
> cannot grasp it. But her [Lament's] gaze
> scares out an owl from the rim of the double crown.
> Brushing with slow downstrokes along the cheek,
> on its ripest roundness, faintly the bird
> traces on the new hearing of the dead,
> on the two pages of an open book,
> the indescribable contour.][29]

What the youth does not have the strength to see, he nonetheless hears. The gaze of the Sphinx is inscribed in his ear as a sign that unifies sight and sound in a single experience. Rilke had already intimated that the owl would perform such a unifying task. Earlier in the elegy he describes the flight of a bird as "das schriftliche Bild seines vereinsamten Schreis" (the written image of its isolated cry).[30] Yet in this case it is not a bird's isolated cry that becomes a graphic image, a sight. This time a sight becomes a sound only to be converted into a legible mark. The enigmatic gaze of the Sphinx is transformed into a word that is recorded on "two pages of an open book" that link heaven and earth. What the youth hears is the music of the stars, or rather the *Sternbilder* (constellations) as *Schriftbilder* (graphic images, signs) in a book that is the essence of the universe—the universe as an undivided whole.

In Celan's poem, by contrast, sight and sound remain divorced, never to be wed, since there is no dimension or sphere—no "Weltinnenraum" (inner space of the world), in Rilke's terms—where life and death meet and merge.[31] The two trade places with each other in an endless exchange, which the poem illustrates through its founding conceit of the speaker as a cliff facing the sea. Throughout the poem this analogy is reiterated in ever-greater detail, making the face of the speaker indistinguishable from the face of a mountain. Thus,

for instance, the image of "the two hollows on the lower seam of the brow [*Stirn*]" would at first seem to suggest that the speaker's eyes are hollowed out like those in ancient statues. At the same time this image is of geological significance to the extent that *Stirn* is not only a common noun for a forehead but also a technical term for the top of a mountain.[32] This kind of incline, known as a *Sattel* (saddle, anti-syncline), is caused by folded layers of rock that often resemble the furrows on a brow, each layer higher than the next.[33] In this regard, the speaker's hollowed eyes are simultaneously hollows in the earth, where a "darkness / spied" (Eräugtes / Dunkel) becomes visible yet again.[34]

Likewise, the spot "Beaten through / by silently swung hammers" would suggest a beating heart, but again only because of a corresponding notion in geology at play in this passage.[35] The cracks through which water seeps in rock are known as *capillaries,* a term that appears with astonishing frequency in Roland Brinkmann's *Survey of Geology,* which Celan cites in several of his word lists.[36] Although this term does not appear in the poem, it nonetheless informs the image it presents of a spot that stands not only in the middle of the poem but also at a thematic level between the forehead and the mouth. Indeed, for this reason the spot in question would appear to be the nose rather than the heart, which supports a network of capillaries that can often be seen throbbing. In this poem, however, the capillaries throb from without rather than within, as indicated by the mere fact that the spot "beaten through" is also where a "winged eye" once brushed the speaker:

> Durchpocht
> von schweigsam geschwungenen Hämmern
> die Stelle,
> wo mich das Flügelaug streifte.
>
> [Beaten through
> by silently swung hammers
> the spot
> where the winged eye brushed me.]

This eye, which the speaker cannot see—he himself has no eyes—molds or sculpts his face, creating an opening through which it can pass into his interior, as the next stanza demonstrates.

The fourth stanza begins in a recess behind the spot at the center of the speaker's face as well as of the poem:

Dahinter,
ausgespart in der Wand,
die Stufe,
drauf das Erinnerte hockt.

[Behind that,
set apart in the wall
the level
where something remembered squats.]

If the level referred to here is both "recessed" and "secluded" in a wall—*ausgespart* can signify either—it is because it is built into a cave that is open on one side but closed on the other. In this manner the poem signals that this cave is simultaneously the speaker's mouth, just as the level or ledge in it is simultaneously his tongue, where "something remembered" squats. From this recess emerges the voice of the poem, which the addressee then takes up not simply as the sea (*das Meer*) but also as the mother (*la mère*), to whom Celan dedicated much of his poetry.

Here in this recess, however, is also where the poem's conceit gives way to its primary concern, which is not the sedimentary cycle but the relation of voice to writing. To the extent that voice is aligned with water and writing with stone, the two are caught in an endless cycle in which each can take the place of the other but in which they can never be simultaneous. In lieu of simultaneity, the poem thus looks for something else that they share, something that could serve as the basis for both, even if they represent opposing phases of the same process, that is, the "today" of the other's "tomorrow" and the "tomorrow" of the other's "today."

The element shared by both, according to the poem, is the "winged eye," which passes through the nose and out the mouth of the speaker, pausing only at the back of his throat as "das Erinnerte." "Das Erinnerte," however, is not only "something remembered," as I have translated it thus far; it is also something that has been internalized (*er-innert*) in the writing of the poem only to be externalized in the poem's voice. What voice conveys to writing, and writing to voice, is this "winged eye," which is neither liquid nor solid but an ethereal element, as its wings suggest, as does its passage through the nose. In *Psyche* Erwin Rohde argues that the Greeks imagined divinity as "a winged god whose nature it is to pass lightly over things—not to fall heavily to earth and there remain ponderously prostrate."[37] To the extent that the eye invoked in the poem brushes the face of the speaker, causing his capillaries to throb, it

could be said to function as such a god. Whether or not it is such a figure, however, does not finally change its role as the meaning that voice and writing exchange as vehicles for the same content. That there is an exchange between voice and writing consequently is due to this eye, which serves as the ground for both even if it is itself in flight.

Facing the Future

Perhaps no thinker has explored more forcefully the implications of a groundless ground than Heidegger in his analysis of the peculiar status of the human as a being thrown into the world in *Being and Time.* The human, or in his vocabulary *Dasein,* is the one being who must contend with the fact that he finds himself in the world, though for no apparent reason: "*That* [Dasein] factically is, might be concealed with regard to its *why,* but the *'that-it-is'* has *itself* been disclosed to Dasein."[38] In the absence of a reason or what in philosophy is called a transcendental ground, Dasein is forced to serve as an anchor for itself; it must be its own ground. In his oft-cited definition of ontological guilt, as opposed to any psychological phenomenon, Heidegger underscores the paradox of a being based in nothing but itself as a mere given or fact. Guilt, as he defines it, is "being-the-ground for a being which is determined by a not—that is, *being-the-ground of a nullity* [*Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit*]" (*B&T,* §58, 261; *S&Z,* §58, 283). The "not" that determines Dasein's being is an abbreviation for the fact that Dasein does *not* author its own existence, or as Heidegger puts it, is "*not* brought into its there of its own accord" (§58, 262, translation modified slightly). Rather Dasein is there (*da*) by virtue of being thrown, though from no place in particular, which would provide it with a ground. And the mere fact that it is warrants that it be a basis for itself, "Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit." That Dasein is "nichtig," null, has nothing to do with its physical presence as a body; throughout *Being and Time* Heidegger insists that Dasein is of a different nature than what is empirically available or ready at hand (*vorhanden*). Rather Dasein is "nichtig," null to the extent that it is entrusted to itself, and the only self it can be in its thrown-ness is baseless, groundless: "Being a *self,* Dasein is the thrown being *as* self. *Not through* itself, but *released to* itself from the ground in order to be *as this ground*" (§58, 262). Released into the world and unto itself, Dasein can only be itself, if it is to be at all, as this released and uprooted being. It is in this manner that Dasein becomes a ground to itself. It embraces its uprootedness as itself, *is* this uprootedness, which amounts to saying a being unto death.

Dasein faces death as a possibility from its outset to the extent that it is a "being which is determined by a not," that is, a limitation, an absence. This limitation is not external to Dasein; it is not a stricture imposed on it. Rather it is a limit within Dasein that determines the range of Dasein's possibilities. The most extreme of these possibilities, according to Heidegger, is death. As long as Dasein is, it faces this prospect, although it can never realize it in any proper sense. For death, as Heidegger is quick to caution, is not like any other possibility. It is not a potential that Dasein brings to fruition nor an end that Dasein can attain, since it comes about only at the expense of Dasein as a being in the world. That it is nonetheless a possibility results from the fact that it is part of Dasein's constitution as a being thrown into the world. Thrown into the world, Dasein is simultaneously thrown into the possibility of death, since in the absence of a ground it must rely on itself to found its own existence. And the one self it can be in its thrown-ness, in its isolation as a naked fact, is a finite self, a being unto death.

What Dasein faces in the future consequently is a possibility that returns to it from its past: the possibility of not being there, which is to say the possibility of not being Dasein insofar as *Dasein* means "being there" or "thereness." For this reason Heidegger also refers to death as the possibility of "the impossibility of existence at all" (§53, 242, translation modified slightly), which is not merely a definition offered for dramatic effect. According to Heidegger, Dasein is the one being that "exists" in the sense that its being consists in the understanding of being, in Dasein's relation to itself. As he explains in the first chapter,

> Dasein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being [*Sein*] this being [*Seiendes*] is concerned *about* its very being. Thus it is constitutive of the being of Dasein to have, in its being, a relation to being. And this in turn means that Dasein understands itself in its being in some way and with some explicitness. . . . *The understanding of being is itself a determination of the being of Dasein.* (§4, 10, translation modified slightly; *S&Z,* §4, 12)

What distinguishes Dasein from all other creatures is that it is the one being that contends with the basis of its being in the world—with the Being (*Sein*), as it were, of its thereness (*Dasein*). Only if Dasein interrogates its Being can it be itself, since Dasein, in contrast to all other beings, is not the effect of a foreign cause but rather an effect of itself. Thus, in understanding its Being, Dasein simultaneously understands itself as the basis for its being in the world, the ground of its own existence.

This understanding takes the form of a projection (*Entwurf*) in which Dasein projects or casts ahead to its most extreme possibility, which is the impossibility of existence. Death represents an impossibility to the extent that it eliminates Dasein's ability to understand itself and thus to be itself. At the same time it represents a possibility to the extent that it is the limit of what Dasein can be as a self-understanding creature or hermeneutical being. According to Heidegger, Dasein first makes death possible in anticipating it as its end, for in so doing it also makes itself available for this possibility: "[it] *frees* itself *for* it" (§53, 243). As this possibility is the most extreme, it also contains all other possibilities available to Dasein, or put otherwise, everything else Dasein is capable of being. For this reason, Heidegger argues that the anticipation of death is the condition for authentic existence: "Anticipation shows itself as the possibility of understanding one's *ownmost* and extreme potentiality-of-being [*Seinkönnen*], that is, as the possibility of *authentic existence*" (§53, 242; *S&Z,* §53, 263). In anticipating the possibility of the impossibility of its own existence, in projecting ahead toward its own death, Dasein reveals to itself the full range of its possibilities. It sketches (the second meaning of the verb *entwerfen*) its ownmost potentiality-of-being, or more simply, its ownmost capacity to be.

These two meanings of the verb *entwerfen,* "projecting" and "sketching," are at play in Celan's poem "Entwurf einer Landschaft," which, as Ulrich Baer has noted, could be translated as either "Design of a Landscape" or "Projection of a Landscape."[39] For Baer, the latter translation is closer to the intent of the poem insofar as the poem in his view projects a place that cannot be referred to any geographical or historical site. The absence of an immediate referent does not diminish the historical weight of the poem, however. On the contrary, Baer argues that the very unlocatability of the place that the poem presents is what distinguishes it as a historic site.[40] This site is that of the death camps, or more generally the Holocaust, which for Baer cannot be relegated to the past, as the Holocaust was never consciously experienced by a subject. The Holocaust in Baer's view eliminated the possibility of experience by making death anonymous.[41] Inasmuch as the victims could not claim their own death, they also could not claim their own life; hence the preponderance of what Baer calls "unclaimed experiences" in Holocaust testimony. The poem "Entwurf einer Landschaft," is but another instance in which a place from the past returns as if from the future, that is, as a projection of what has yet to be.

While I agree with Baer's assertion that there is something proleptic about the poem, I disagree with his more general position that the condition for experience is the ability to claim death as one's own. I find this position more

problematic than several others he outlines in his readings of Celan's poems, including the insistence that the Holocaust is a place rather than a time and the near tautological claim that the undecidability of reference in Celan's work is a decided reference to the Holocaust, since the Holocaust is finally an undecidable event, that is, an unmasterable or unknowable one.[42] Each of these arguments is based on the more general assumption that the Holocaust robbed the subject of the ability to claim death as the limit of his or her own horizon. Implicit in this argument is a critique of Heidegger's notion of *Jemeinigkeit,* the idea that death is always my own (*jemeinig*), which I cannot exchange with anyone else. But Heidegger distinguishes, where Baer does not, between the actual circumstances of death and the possibility of death, which arises within the subject. I make death possible for myself in anticipating it as my end, as the limit of what I am capable of being as an entity alone in the world. When and how I die is irrelevant in this context, which is not to say that genocide does not have traumatic effects. It does insofar as it adds urgency to the question of what I can possibly be in my isolation and uprootedness. The poem "Entwurf einer Landschaft" raises this question in exploring the basis of its utterances as a text that has no external foundation, no ground anterior to it. For the poem begins deep in the earth, specifically in "Circular graves, below" which would appear to be empty. This hollow, I would like to show, returns at the poem's end as a wound the poem projects to mark the limit of its ownmost capacity to be.

Entwurf einer Landschaft

Rundgräber, unten. Im
Viertakt der Jahresschritt auf
den Steilstufen rings.

Laven, Basalte, weltherz-
durchglühtes Gestein.
Quelltuff,
wo uns das Licht wuchs, vor
dem Atem.

Ölgrün, meerdurchstäubt die
unbetretbare Stunde. Gegen
die Mitte zu, grau,
ein Steinsattel, drauf,
gebeult und verkohlt,
die Tierstirn mit
der strahligen Blesse. (*GW,* 1:184)

[*Projection of a Landscape*

Circular graves, below. In
four-beat time the year's pace on
the steep steps around them.

Lavas, basalts, glowing
stone from the world's heart.
Wellspring tuff
where light grew for us, before
our breath.

Oilgreen, soaked with sea spray the
impassable hour. Toward
the centre, grey,
a stone saddle, and on it,
dented and charred,
the animal forehead with
its radiant blaze.][43]

The question to which the poem returns in each stanza is that of grounds. Beginning with "circular graves" and ending with "the / impassable hour," the poem consistently draws attention to a hollow in the earth that is uninhabitable. This space below nonetheless produces the ground above, as the second stanza in particular demonstrates in its invocation of geological terminology. "Lavas, basalts, glowing / stone" are all materials that a volcano casts out from a pit deep in the earth where rock is melted and then ejected by gas. The title of the poem thus refers in part to the landscape that a volcano "projects" from an empty space in the earth's interior.[44] At the same time the title refers to the poem's "projection" of itself from "circular graves, below" where the only motion is that of time itself. Time marches on in this subterranean region indifferent to the seasons above even if its rhythm would suggest them: "In / four-beat time the year's pace." For in this place below, where there is no distinction between day and night, time itself is a pure abstraction, a mechanical process emptied of all content. The graves of the poem thus bear a striking resemblance to the wheels of a clock not only in their shape but also in their ridges ("steep steps"), which recall the teeth on wheels of a clock. In each case time revolves around a dead center, an immobile point in the middle that the poem later calls "the / impassable hour." It is from here that the poem sets out, naming its groundlessness and in so doing grounding itself.

The mere act of naming these graves furnishes the poem with a ground, since these words are themselves the basis for the text that follows. In other

words, they give the poem an anchor, which the poem does not precede but from which it follows, as Dasein follows from the mere fact that it is in Heidegger's analysis. Like Dasein, the poem is "never existent *before* its ground, but only *from it* and *as it*" (*B&T,* §58, 262). According to this logic, the poem *is* on the basis of its first words, which would not be exceptional were these words not "Rundgräber, unten." But as these are the first words of the poem, they place the poem in relation to death, that is, in relation to its conclusion, even if that conclusion is also its outset. The poem's origin in "graves, below" determines what it can be above, since the poem can never be done with death no matter how far it travels from its opening words. As long as the poem is, it is threatened with the possibility of being swallowed up by the graves that lie beneath it, the silence that subtends its utterances.

In this regard the poem is mortal like none other Celan wrote. With every word it runs the risk of expiring like a breath, which is in fact what it names as its driving force:

> Laven, Basalte, weltherz-
> durchglühtes Gestein.
> Quelltuff,
> wo uns das Licht wuchs, vor
> dem Atem.
>
> [Lavas, basalts, glowing
> stone from the world's heart.
> Wellspring tuff
> where light grew for us, before
> our breath.]

The first two lines of the stanza present a virtual inventory of the material a volcano spits out; the last two lines, by contrast, the almost ethereal elements that fire an eruption. Between the two lies what the poem calls "Quelltuff," which is itself an amalgam of two phenomena, one from above and one from below. Tuff is a porous rock that forms from volcanic ash; often it piles in small, rounded hills called *Quellkuppen* (springing hilltops) in German.[45] A *Quelle,* by contrast, is a reservoir in the earth; it is usually associated with water but can also contain gas, as in the case of volcanoes. Taken together these two phenomena, a spring and a tuff, name a specific site: the mouth of a volcano, where the inside of the earth meets the outside. It is here "where light grew for us, before / our breath" in what amounts to a representation of the poem's originary moment. Breath from below encounters light from above in an apparent play on the image of a volcano spitting fire. What this volcano

spits out, however, is not fire but words, since it is finally the basis of the poem, the ground of this erupted text.

As the poem progresses downward, it thus reaches a point where it can progress no farther, where it is once more propelled upwards. This point is precisely the poem's outset, the place "where light grew for us, before / our breath." The poem can never retreat behind this point, since in advance of it the poem is not there at all. In other words, in advance of the breath that projects the poem's words the poem does not exist; it does not yet constitute a "there." For this reason the poem relies on metaphors of space to represent what is finally a temporal moment. Before the "we" of the poem ever released a breath, before they ever exhaled the words of the text, there was nothing that could be said to constitute a world for them, neither a landscape nor a poem. This world comes to be as words are projected from below, marking the limit of the horizon, the farthest reach of the poem.

In the final stanza the poem thus traces its movement from the interior to the exterior of the earth:

> Ölgrün, meerdurchstäubt die
> unbetretbare Stunde. Gegen
> die Mitte zu, grau,
> ein Steinsattel, drauf,
> gebeult und verkohlt,
> die Tierstirn mit
> der strahligen Blesse.
>
> [Oilgreen, soaked with sea spray the
> impassable hour. Toward
> the centre, grey,
> a stone saddle, and on it,
> dented and charred,
> the animal forehead with
> its radiant blaze.]

At first glance the stanza would appear to erect a monument composed of the remains of a dead animal. If these remains constitute a monument, however, it is because they first and foremost constitute a place: a landscape the poem produces in projecting itself from the grave. A *Sattel* (saddle), as I have indicated, is not only a leather seat harnessed to a horse's back but also an incline caused by successive folds in the earth, which can often be quite steep. The crown of these folds is called a forehead, a *Stirn,* because the lines on it resemble the furrows on a brow, each one higher than the next. As the poem progresses down the page,

it thus also reaches the top of the landscape that it creates out of words and nothing else. This movement culminates in the image of a "strahlige Blesse" (a radiant brand mark or blaze), which at first would seem to have little to do with the topographical features sketched in the previous verses. But among the most common brand marks for a horse, according to Wahrig's dictionary, is a *Stern* (star), which the poem implies as an unwritten term at least twice, first in the description of this mark as "radiant" and then in the placement of this mark on a "Stirn," which is virtually identical in sound with the word *Stern.*[46] The yellow star Jews had to wear after 1939 as a brand mark over their chests appears at the end of the poem as a star marking the limit of the poem's horizon.[47] This star marks a limit, because it is not only a *Blesse* but a *blessure:* a wound the poem bears within itself as a text originating in the grave, a text that in the spatial and temporal sense of the term has only death and destruction *before* it.

Through the geological conceit, the poem is thus able to represent itself as a finite entity that is almost human, indeed an entity that has a face. The science of the earth becomes in Celan's poetry a science of the text precisely because this discipline, as practiced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, derives its vocabulary from the human body, which serves as a model for the earth.[48] The terms for forehead (*Stirn*) and capillary (*Kapillar*) are but two instances in which geology borrows from anatomy to describe the physical world. Celan's poems, however, do not merely reiterate this fiction of the world as a body. Rather they exploit this fiction to create a place the departed can look back upon as the world they have left. For this reason, the world in Celan's poetry must have a face, one that it shares with the poem that sketches or represents it. The two converge because the world in Celan's texts is finally a world composed of geological figures that model stone after flesh. Celan's poems reverse this order, turning flesh into words, or more precisely, lithographs, engravings in stone that provide an impress of what is not there. In a conversation with Hugo Huppert regarding Gisèle Celan-Lestrange's lithographs, Celan is reported to have said, "I am very impressed, if not to say influenced by the precise intelligence of this art of engraving."[49] The geological poems go a long way toward explaining why Celan would have been fascinated with this art form, in which every print bears witness to a plate that is no longer present. The absent entity in his geological poems is the eye that illuminates both the world and the text as a radiant body, an *Aug* in Greek and in German. In this chapter I have considered the face this eye leaves in its wake. In the next I will consider the face it constitutes in the heavens.

2 *Stargazing*

—Ein Stern, tu ihn,
tu den Stern in die Nacht. "Ein Holzstern"

—a star, put it,
put the star in the night. "A Wooden Star"

In his seminal study *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* Gershom Scholem recounts a tale originally from the Talmud but taken up again in the fifth century by a group of Gnostics known as the Merkaba mystics because of their emphasis on the throne of God (*merkaba*) in the first chapter of Ezekiel. Four rabbis enter paradise and are warned by one not to mistake the marble there for water, since then they would be unworthy of seeing the Lord. According to Scholem, the Merkaba mystics interpreted this tale to mean that only those initiated in certain rites could ascend to the sixth of God's seven palaces, which are all made of precious gems.[1] The notion of the sky as one or many layers of transparent rock dates back at least to the ancient Babylonians and is to some extent preserved in the term *firmament.* In Celan's poetry this tradition is echoed in the frequent pairing of stones and stars, which in German have the advantage of being written almost identically (*Stein* and *Stern*). For instance, in "Entwurf einer Landschaft" a volcano spews the contents of the earth into the sky. "Allerseelen" (All Souls' Day) likewise points to an eruption that sends rocks into the air: "Vogelflug, Steinflug, tausend / beschriebene Bahnen" (*GW,* 1:183) (Bird flight, stone flight, a thousand / inscribed orbits).

Equally prevalent in Celan's poetry, however, is the reverse phenomenon: meteorites and comets that crash into the earth. The poem "Soviel Gestirne" (So Many Stars) is exemplary in this regard: "kometenhaft schwirrte ein Aug / auf Erloschenes zu" (*GW,* 1:217) (an eye whirred comet-like / toward something extinguished). My focus in this chapter will indeed be on fallen stars, but stars understood in a Kabbalist context as the sparks of a divine light. Throughout

the 1950s and 1960s Celan read Gershom Scholem's groundbreaking work on the history and symbolism of the Kabbalah.[2] This interest, I will show, changed the character of his work, which no longer aimed to be in the manner of Dasein, that is, as an ontological entity, but to live, which is a theological category limited to creatures that breathe. In Scholem's work Celan found a conception of the cosmos as something more than an empty expanse, a cosmos that could be said to consist of words, light, and breath since it is also the body of God. Before addressing the connection between God's words and his body, I will discuss the transition in Celan's work from a concern with being to a concern with living and concomitantly from a concern with finitude to a concern with mortality.

Stones and Stars

Nacht

Kies und Geröll. Und ein Scherbenton, dünn,
als Zuspruch der Stunde.

Augentausch, endlich, zur Unzeit:
bildbeständig,
verholzt
die Netzhaut—:
das Ewigkeitszeichen.

Denkbar:
droben, im Weltgestänge,
sterngleich,
das Rot zweier Münder.

Hörbar (vor Morgen?): ein Stein,
der den andern zum Ziel nahm. (*GW,* 1:170)

[*Night*

Pebbles and scree. And a shard note, thin,
as the hour's message of comfort.

Exchange of eyes, finite, at the wrong time:
image-constant,
lignified
the retina—:
the sign of eternity.

> Conceivable:
> up there, in the grid of the world,
> like stars,
> the red of two mouths.
>
> Audible (before dawn?): a stone
> that made the other its target.][3]

The poem "Nacht" is among the first in Celan's *oeuvre* to establish a direct relationship between stones and stars. As pebbles roll and exchange positions, so too does the sun, which moves each day from the east to the west, where it becomes visible as a fiery ball. In German these two phases of the sun are referred to as the *Morgen-* and *Abendrot,* expressions that are at play in the third stanza in the figure of "the red of two mouths." There the setting and rising sun appear at the same time. Or rather they are "conceived" as appearing simultaneously, which would also suggest that this does not happen in point of fact. And indeed the setting and rising sun cannot be seen at the same time, since the two are not opposing poles in space but opposing moments in time. If the poem nonetheless treats them as opposing poles, it is to explore the relation of space to time, which at night is more problematic than in the day, when the sun can be seen moving across the sky.

The movement of the sun has traditionally served as a measure of the passing of time because it occurs on a regular basis and can be seen from almost any location. It was consequently assumed until Copernicus that the sun circled the globe, rising in the east and setting in the west before dipping around the earth. The circular path of the sun guaranteed its regularity. As the sun moved in the day, so too it did at night, in an arc that covered half the circumference of the earth, allowing for equal periods of light and darkness. While Copernicus may have reversed the terms of this theory, arguing that it was the earth and not the sun that moved, he did not change its fundamental premise, namely, that time is expressed in movement. Since Aristotle, if not before, time has stood as a riddle for philosophy, precisely because the forms in which it is expressed (e.g., the movement of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, etc.) are not identical with it. As Aristotle demonstrated in the *Physics,* time is always experienced under the rubric of a change: the changing condition of a body (i.e., aging) or the changing location of a body (i.e., moving from here to there). In both cases it is a physical phenomenon, a body in space, that indicates the passing of time, although time itself remains elusive.

Time remains elusive because it is not space. It is neither the distance a body travels nor the stages a body goes through, although it could be said to depend on each. Each of these is a metaphor for time, a vehicle for a tenor that is not only invisible but also inaccessible to the senses. The poem "Nacht" does not aim to solve the riddle of time in itself, yet it takes the terms in which time is conventionally conceived and turns them on their head. If time can only be experienced through a movement in space, then space is a condition for the experience of time, a prerequisite for time's perception. It is this insight that enables the poem to compare two experiences of time at night.[4] The first is the sound of two stones hitting each other. The second is the sight of two mouths at opposing ends of the sky. What these two experiences share is, finally, space, space for movement and stasis, for that which is fleeting and that which is eternal.

From the outset of the poem the sound of stones is linked to the passing of time. A "shard note" announces the hour like the chiming of an old-fashioned clock: "Kies und Geröll. Und ein Scherbenton, dünn, / als Zuspruch der Stunde." Although these lines do not contain a verb—in fact, the only verb in the poem comes in the final verse—they express movement through their syntax, which is paratactic; a series of nouns is connected by "and." In this manner the poem is able to communicate the rolling motion of pebbles and scree ("Geröll"), which produce "a shard note, thin," which again is a nearly performative utterance. For the vowel in the word "thin" (dünn) prolongs the line, functioning in this regard as the "Zuspruch der Stunde," which is not only the "hour's message of comfort" but also the "speaking of the hour" (das *Zusprechen* der Stunde). No sooner does this sentinel sound, however, than it also subsides. The ringing of the hour is replaced with a vision that is internal rather than external.

The middle, or interior, stanzas of the poem recount a sight made possible by an "exchange of eyes":

> Exchange of eyes, finite, at the wrong time:
> image-constant,
> lignified
> the retina—:
> the sign of eternity.
>
> Conceivable:
> up there, in the grid of the world,
> like stars,
> the red of two mouths.

Both the sudden and the enigmatic nature of this exchange are to some extent explained in the verses that follow, which focus on the figure of the retina, the tissue responsible for generating visual images. As a result of this exchange a glimpse is afforded into the interior of the eye, where the rays filtered through the pupil and the lens are transformed into images that appear to be outside. Indeed for this reason the images we encounter in dreams are often indistinguishable from actual sights. Vision, as the physicist and physiologist Hermann von Helmholtz demonstrated, depends on an apparatus that can convert rays of light into pictures.[5] The "exchange of eyes" that the poem speaks of would thus suggest in part the exchange that occurs when sleep sets in and the inner eye takes over for the outer eye in regulating the retina. That this exchange is unmediated, that it occurs suddenly and "at the wrong time," is owing to the fact that sleep can never be willed or forced. It comes of its own in a non-time, which is another possible translation of "Unzeit."

At various levels the poem notes the function of the retina in its account of the interior of the eye. First the description of the retina as "bildbeständig" (consisting of images) points to the role of this organ in generating images out of rays of light. What we see when looking outwards are in fact images that come from the back of the eye, the site of the retina, which is composed of a network of rods and cones. These rods and cones, moreover, are represented in the interpunctuation of the text. The symbols "—:" following the word "retina" are similar in form to the rods and cones that make up this organ. Finally, the description of the retina as "verholzt" would seem to play on the name Helmholtz, the scientist who first explained the function of this organ and in so doing founded modern optics. Yet what remains the most important feature of this organ is its name, "die Netzhaut," which could be translated somewhat more literally as the "netted tissue." The retina, or netted tissue, like the "grid of the world" (Weltgestänge), represents a Cartesian or graphlike space, which is in fact of importance for the entire collection *Sprachgitter* (Speech Grille), as the title indicates.[6] It is in this space that pebbles roll over one another and the "red of two mouths" appears, since this space is finally a map of all space in its uniformity. It is, in other words, an abstraction that does not exist save in the mind as a map extending infinitely in all directions, encompassing both heaven and earth.

For this reason, the poem refers to the retina as "the sign of eternity." Insofar as it is made of wood ("verholzt") it is not eternal, but it represents eternity in its netlike structure, which evokes a uniform space untouched by temporality. In the third stanza this structure returns in the form of a cosmic "grid" (Gestänge) which is no longer in the eye but outside it, as a map of the space of the universe:

Conceivable:
up there, in the grid of the world,
like stars,
the red of two mouths.

What is conceivable in this space is a simultaneous sunrise and sunset, since this space does not recognize distinct moments, only positions or coordinates. That each of these appearances is nonetheless associated with a time of day underscores the suspension of time at this juncture in the poem, where movement is replaced with stasis.

This is at least the impression the poem seeks to create to draw attention to a second aspect of the night, namely, the night as infinite duration. In this eternity two mouths stand facing each other as if poised for a kiss, which, admittedly, never happens because of a sudden resumption of movement: "Hörbar (vor Morgen?): ein Stein, / der den andern zum Ziel nahm" (Audible (before dawn?): a stone / that made the other its target). At first this stanza would seem to follow from the previous one. As the "red of two mouths" can be conceived, so too can be heard the sound of two stones, which, according to the past tense of the poem's one verb, have already hit each other. In its parenthetical remark, however, the poem places this chronology in question. For here it asks whether something can be heard that has yet to take place, whether the sound of two stones hitting each other can be detected before tomorrow (*Morgen*), when the stones will no longer be in the same place. What the question designates as the past, consequently, is not what has happened already but what will have happened when a new day dawns and the sun rises in the east. In this manner the poem circumvents its vision of eternity without ever closing or adjourning it. It brings the night to a preemptive close in order to preserve it for a future date when the sound of stones will no longer interrupt the night, when only space will remain. Until then stones will continue to take aim at one another, and the setting and the rising sun will continue to trade places in the heavens, two phenomena, one a sound, the other a sight, that serve as vehicles for time's expression.

Orphans

The poem "Erratisch" likewise insists on a connection between stones and stars, but whereas in "Nacht" the two were associated with different experiences of time, here they illustrate two modes of being, one earthly, the other celestial:

Erratisch

Die Abende graben sich dir
unters Aug. Mit der Lippe auf-
gesammelten Silben—schönes,
lautloses Rund—
helfen dem Kriechstern
in ihre Mitte. Der Stein,
schläfennah einst, tut sich hier auf:

bei allen
versprengten
Sonnen, Seele,
warst du, im Äther. (*GW,* 1:235)

[*Erratic*

The evenings bury themselves
beneath your eye. Syllables picked up
with the lip—lovely, voiceless
syllables in a ring—
usher a creeping star
into their midst. The stone, once
close to the temples, now opens up:

you, my soul, were
with all the other
shattered suns,
you were in the ether.][7]

As several critics have pointed out, the adjective *erratic* is among other things a geological term.[8] Typically it is used to describe a boulder transported by a glacier to a place where the rocks are of a different composition. In German, erratic blocks are also called *Findlinge* (orphans) because they are cut from their native habitat.[9] In Celan's poem this term is extended to include extraterrestrial phenomena. The title of the poem refers to a "creeping star" that turns up in the middle of a circle of syllables:

Syllables . . .
. . . . . .
usher a creeping star
into their midst.

As an orphaned star cut from its source, the "creeping star" of the poem resembles what Jean Paul called the "the countless, quicksilver, punctual I's" (zahlenlose quecksilberne Punkte von Ichs) in his "Rede des toten Christus von Weltge-

bäude herab, dass kein Gott sei" (Speech of the Dead Christ from the Top of the World That There Is No God). This text concerns the dissolution of the universe in the absence of the Godhead.[10] "Erratisch" responds to Jean Paul's nightmare vision of a world that has no heavenly Father and in which, as Jean Paul puts it, "we are all orphans" ("Rede des toten Christus," 269) (wir sind alle Waisen), that is, erratic blocks, or *Findlinge,* to return to the imagery of the poem.

Celan's interest in the romantic poet Jean Paul is well documented. Bernhard Böschenstein, for instance, reports that Celan told him that the one German author he had brought with him to Paris in 1948 was Jean Paul.[11] Elsewhere Böschenstein has argued that traces of Jean Paul's idiosyncratic idiom can be found in several of Celan's poems.[12] And "Erratisch" itself has stood as an example of Celan's debt to the romantic poet.[13] Yet the relation of "Erratisch" to the "Rede des toten Christus" is hardly affirmative, even if the poem draws on Jean Paul's imagery of shattered suns and a fragmented universe. In "Erratisch" the dispersion of light does not contradict the unity of God, whereas for Jean Paul this dispersion destroys the spiritual universe, which had held the material world together as one.

The "Speech of the Dead Christ from the Top of the World That There Is No God" is ostensibly an account of a dream in which the narrator awakens to a world lacking all order, as there is no God to govern it. In his preface the narrator indicates that the dream he is about to tell has a pedagogical purpose: to "inspire fear in scholars" (einige . . . Magister in Furcht zu setzen) who blithely dismiss the existence of God as if God were a mere phantasm ("Rede des toten Christus," 267). The dream, in other words, argues against atheism not by refuting its claims but by exposing the consequences of this doctrine, which the narrator sums up as follows:

> Das ganze geistige Universum wird durch die Hand des Atheismus zersprengt und zerschlagen in zahlenlose quecksilberne Punkte von Ichs, welche blinken, rinnen, *irren,* zusammen- und auseinanderfliehen, ohne Einheit und Bestand. Niemand ist im All so sehr allein als ein Gottesleugner—er trauert mit einem verwaiseten Herzen, das den größten Vater verloren [hat]. (266, emphasis added)
>
> [Under the hand of atheism the whole of the spiritual universe is smashed and crushed into countless, quicksilver, punctual I's, which flicker, meander, and *err* and converge and diverge without unity or duration. No one is so alone in the cosmos as a denier of God. He grieves with the forlorn heart of someone who has lost the greatest Father.]

Atheism does not merely deny the existence of a spiritual universe. It crushes it until it falls apart into innumerable pieces, which the passage calls "quicksilver, punctual I's" in what would appear to be a dramatic demonstration of the dangers of atomism. Yet the universe in question here is not a physical but a spiritual one, that is, a universe that only the ego or I has access to as the seat of all reflection, or more generally, thought. For this reason the destruction of this universe results in "countless, quicksilver, punctual I's," which are all fragments of what was once a spiritual universe symbolized in the sun.

The narrator indicates as much in the passage immediately preceding this one. Through the denial of the Godhead he claims, "I lose the present world and its sun" (266) (verlier' ich die gegenwärtige [Welt], nämlich die Sonne derselben). To the extent that the Godhead is equated with the sun, "the countless . . . punctual I's" can be said to be quicksilver, which is not only a glossy substance but also the substance of the soul in alchemy.[14] And indeed the leitmotif of the text is that of dispersed lights. For instance, in his introduction the narrator refers to his soul as "bright dew drops of ego" ("Rede des toten Christus," 267) (lichte Tautropfen von Ich). Later, in his dream, the figure of Christ is said to behold "the collapsed edifice of the world with a thousand suns" (269) (das mit tausend Sonnen durchbrochne Weltgebäude). And lastly, as the world dissolves the dead Christ sees "the torch dance of errant celestial lights" (270) (die Fackeltanz der himmlischen Irrlichter), which is of significance for Celan's text insofar as these lights err or wander. (*Irren* is related to the English *err,* which is the root for the word *erratic.*) These lights err, as do the thousand punctual I's, since with the destruction of the spiritual universe they no longer have a sphere where they belong. Once the spiritual universe collapses, once it is crushed into shards, all that remains is a material world that is as diffuse as it is lifeless. For without a central figure, be it God or the sun, the world loses the transcendental principle that had both permeated and governed it. For this reason the narrator must insist that atheism pulverizes God. Only with God's fragmentation does the world become a fragmentary and senseless mass, or as the narrator puts it, a "corpse . . . that grows in the grave" (266) (ein Leichnam . . . der im Grabe wächset).

The poem "Erratisch" begins with a grave in the eye, in which the external world is buried as if it had died:

> Die Abende graben sich dir
> unters Aug. Mit der Lippe auf-
> gesammelte Silben—schönes,
> lautloses Rund—

helfen dem Kriechstern
in ihre Mitte.

[The evenings bury themselves
beneath your eye. Syllables picked up
with the lip—lovely, voiceless
syllables in a ring—
usher a creeping star
into their midst.]

To the extent that evenings bury themselves beneath the eye, the eye grows dark because its bearer sleeps or, alternatively, has died. Whether this image signifies sleep or death nonetheless is not an explicit concern of the poem. Rather the poem emphasizes a movement upwards and downwards that mirrors the one between sleeping and waking in a dream in the "Rede des toten Christus": "Once on a summer evening, I was lying on a mountain facing the sun and fell asleep. I dreamt that I woke up in a cemetery" (268) (Ich lag einmal an einem Sommerabende vor der Sonne auf einem Berg und entschlief. Da träumte mir, ich erwachte auf dem Gottesacker). What in Jean Paul's text figures as the reverse dynamic of falling asleep and waking up, of closing and opening the eyes, becomes in Celan's text the movement of sinking and rising, of sealing and opening up. As evenings bury themselves "beneath the eye," the mouth could be said to open "up," for the phrase "Mit der Lippe auf-" when read in isolation from the remainder of the text simply means "with the lip open" or "turned up." In an early draft of the poem Celan in fact underscored this possibility. There the final lines of the poem read:

Wieviel
versprengte Sonnen. Wieviel
atemspeiende Krater.[15]

[How many
shattered suns. How many
breath-spitting craters.]

In this early draft the mouth opens up to expel a breath in the same way that a volcano expels gas, fire, and air. In the final version the reference to breath is more muted, but it still persists in the play of the prepositions "unter" (under, below) and "auf" (up, open), which frame the second verse.

Above all, however, "auf" is a syllable that in a text that speaks of the aid provided by syllables merits attention:

Syllables picked up
with the lip—lovely, voiceless
syllables in a ring—
usher a creeping star
into their midst.

At first these lines would appear to represent a departure from the previous context. A single eye is replaced with a solitary lip, and buried evenings are replaced with syllables that come to life insofar as they help something into their midst. Yet in much the same manner that Jean Paul's "countless, quicksilver, punctual I's" reveal that what is fractured is not the physical but the spiritual universe, so too these syllables reveal that the phenomenon in question is not a body but language that is figured as something corporeal. The word for "language" in both Hebrew and Yiddish is the same as the word for "lip," something Celan most certainly would have known, as the distinction between *loshen kodesh* (sacred tongue) and *mama loshen* (mother tongue) is extremely important in Yiddish. In this regard the syllables mentioned in the poem are not only "picked up with the lip" but also picked up "with" or "in" language. And what is represented as a body, even a body of cosmic proportions, is a linguistic corpus, as in Jean Paul's text what is represented as the shattered fragments of the sun is a dispersed and fragmented Godhead.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the poem's erratic element: a "creeping star," which is itself a compound noun formed out of two syllables, *Kriech* and *Stern,* which are rarely placed together. The conjunction of the two nonetheless animates the poem insofar as the "creeping star" comes to stand for the meaning the poem conveys, which is "erratic" in the geological sense that it is foreign to its environment. This environment is that of syllables that form a circle around the "creeping star," as if this star were the center of their universe, the sun in their linguistic cosmos. And indeed the creeping star is a sun in a cosmos of sorts, even if it is also a chance combination of syllables that would seem to have little in common. What makes the "creeping star" a sun is its symbolic function in the poem as a figure for the poem's meaning, which is at once fragmentary and whole.

This meaning is fragmentary insofar as the "creeping star" is one of many shattered suns in the final stanza:

Der Stein,
schläfennah einst, tut sich hier auf:

bei allen

versprengten Sonnen, Seele,
warst du, im Äther.

[The stone, once
close to the temples, now opens up:

you, my soul, were
with all the other
shattered suns,
you were in the ether.]

To the extent that the eye in the poem is a grave, the stone that opens here is the gravestone covering it, albeit one that has not the hardness of marble but the softness of flesh, since it is also an eyelid. This lid, we are told, in a remark that cleverly points to the written character of the text, was "schläfennah einst" (once close to the temples). *Einst* is nothing but a reversal of the letters in *Stein.* As the eyelid changes positions, so too do the letters of the poem in what could be called the performative dimension of the text, its enactment of its own content. The danger of this analogy, however, is that it reduces the images of the text to mere statements about the poem, to the garments cloaking the spirit of the written text.

The poem addresses this danger in pushing the analogy between the text and its images to an extreme. It makes the relation of the body to the soul its primary concern at the thematic level. In its exploration of this relation the poem comes closest to, as well as distances itself most dramatically from, Jean Paul's "Rede des toten Christus," in which a dispersed God is said to be no God at all, only disparate matter. Jean Paul's text is nothing short of the nightmare of Christianity. If there is no God who can reclaim his son, or conversely, if the son cannot join his father in eternal life, then the universe is indeed a mass lacking all order, a corpse "that grows in the grave." In "Erratisch," however, spirit can be dispersed and still remain one because of the theological backdrop of the poem, which is not Christian Pietism but Jewish mysticism as interpreted by Scholem:

bei allen
versprengten
Sonnen, Seele,
warst du, im Äther.

[you, my soul, were
with all the other
shattered suns,
you were in the ether.]

The crawling star of the previous stanza is identified here as the soul of the poem's corpus, that is, the soul of the body represented in the poem as well as the soul of the poem as a body. This soul, we learn, is one of many "shattered suns," which at first would seem to allude to the "errant celestial lights," the "countless, quicksilver, punctual I's" in Jean Paul's text. Yet for Jean Paul it was precisely the dissolution of the sun that eradicated the distinction between heaven and earth, whereas in "Erratisch" this dissolution affirms the existence of a spiritual realm, a heaven separate from the earth. The soul of the poem is accordingly placed in two realms at once: "with all / the other shattered suns" below and "in the ether" up above. In other words, the phrase "du warst" participates in two statements: the declaration that the soul is one of many "shattered suns" and the assertion that it remains intact in the sky. In *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism,* Scholem underscores the importance of the motif of "shattered . . . lights and sparks" in the Lurianic Kabbalah, the mystical movement that developed around Isaac Luria in the sixteenth century in the city of Safed, near the Sea of Galilee.[16] This motif plays a particular role in two concepts: the breaking of the vessels, which initiates history, and the *Tikkun olam,* or restoration of the world, which brings history to an end.

According to Scholem, the first act of Creation in the Lurianic Kabbalah was not a movement outwards but one inwards in which God retracted a part of himself to create a space for something other than himself, even if that other was only emptiness. God's eternal light flowed into this vacated space, and the result was the emergence of the primordial man, known as Adam Kadmon, who, as Scholem is quick to point out, "is nothing but a first configuration of the divine light" (Scholem, *Major Trends,* 265). The divine light shot forth from each of the orifices on Adam Kadmon's face, albeit in a state of disarray, which necessitated the creation of ten vessels to contain the divine light. Each of these vessels was to correspond to one of the ten Sefiroth, God's emanations or manifestations, which are arranged hierarchically and include such aspects as wisdom, intelligence, mercy, and judgment. The divine light, however, proved to be too powerful for the seven lower vessels, which eventually burst into innumerable fragments, many of which were still covered with a divine residue. For not all the divine light returned to God, who remained enclosed in himself throughout this process even as his light flowed into the space he evacuated for the sake of Creation. Some was dispersed as sparks or flames, which became the sparks of the soul that animate all creatures and things (268, 278–79).[17] Because man bears this spark, he also bears the responsibility to cleanse the world and to restore the dispersed light of God to its proper place

(273–75). Only if he cleanses the world of evil can he do this, since according to Scholem what led to the breaking of the vessels was the commingling of evil and light in them (267). This is the doctrine of *Tikkun,* the restoration of the world to an ideal state in which God is both within himself and outside himself as the ten Sefiroth, which are also called the "countenance of God" (269). Celan's poem invokes this myth in its "shattered suns," which are dispersed below as "creeping stars" but also remain above "in the ether" as part of God's indivisible light. The poem invokes this myth to explain the nature of meaning itself, be it the meaning of a poem or of the universe.[18] What in Jean Paul's text was an impossibility or a contradiction in terms—a fractured God—becomes in Celan's text the guarantee that all *Findlinge* (orphans) have a place where they belong, a father in the heavens.

Death and Rebirth

"Erratisch" is one of several poems in *Die Niemandsrose* that allude to Scholem's account of Jewish mysticism. The poem could in fact be considered a play on Scholem's first name, which in Hebrew means a stranger or someone who has erred into a foreign land, as explained in Exodus: "[Zippora] bore [Moses] a son, and he called him Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land" (Exod. 2:22). The bulk of the allusions to religious sources in the poem are to the Lurianic Kabbalah. Scholem identifies the expulsion from Spain in 1492 as the primary impetus for this mystical movement, which concentrates on the catastrophe that initiated history and the restoration that will end it (*Major Trends,* 244–47). Up to this point the messianic impulse did not dominate Jewish mysticism or thought. Only the encounter with a historical catastrophe gave rise to the idea that destruction could be the precursor to a messianic age, according to Scholem.

Given this historical backdrop, it is not surprising that the Lurianic Kabbalah also took hold of the imagination of eastern European Jews in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who suffered numerous pogroms and other forms of persecution. Hasidism is primarily an adaptation of the Lurianic Kabbalah (328). Celan would have been familiar with this doctrine not only through Scholem's work but also through his encounters with the Hasidic community in Czernowitz, where he was born in 1920 and remained until 1944. Czernowitz was often referred to as the easternmost outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with good reason, situated as it is north of the Carpathian Mountains on the banks of the river Pruth. Moreover, Czernowitz

lies near Sadagora, where an important sect of Hasidism developed. In the poem with the lengthy title "Eine Gauner- und Ganovenweise / Gesungen zu Paris Emprès Pontoise / von Paul Celan / aus Czernowitz bei Sadagora" (*GW,* 1:229) (A Rogue and Robber Ballad / Sung in Paris near Pointoise / by Paul Celan / from Czernowitz near Sadagora) Celan traces his lineage back to this center of Hasidic culture.

In most of the poems from the 1963 collection *Die Niemandsrose* onwards, however, the allusions are to the medieval Kabbalah, which flourished in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain and southern France in tandem with scholasticism and Islamic mysticism. In the readings that follow, I explain the doctrines from this school that influenced Celan. In general what seems to have generated Celan's interest was the intertwining of cosmogony and theogony in this form of mysticism. The unfolding of the world runs parallel to the unfolding of God since what subtends them both is the language of Creation as recorded in Genesis. The monumental work of this school is the *Sefer Ha-Zohar* (The Book of Splendor). Like many tractates in the Jewish tradition, "the *Zohar* is written in pseudepigraphic form" (Scholem, *Major Trends,* 157). The treatise represents itself as the transcription of the oral teachings of famous historical rabbis, who comment on scripture or other scriptural commentaries. Celan in all likelihood did not have firsthand knowledge of the text. If he did, it was through Scholem's partial translation of it. But from the writings of both Scholem and Martin Buber he would have become familiar with the central tenets of Jewish mysticism in its many variations.

As previously mentioned, the poem "Erratisch" differs from Celan's other Kabbalist-inspired texts in that its primary concern is with the relation of the body to the soul rather than with the relation of the soul to God or even the relation of God to himself. In poems such as "Helle Steine" (Bright Stars) and "Mit allen Gedanken" (With all my thoughts) the emphasis falls on the union of a masculine lover and a feminine beloved, who form the two faces of the Godhead, according to Scholem. God is both the one who plants a seed and the ground in which this seed sprouts. In other words, he is both the father and the mother of Creation, albeit at different stages, as I will explain shortly. Scholem maintains that God's dual role as mother and father of Creation serves as a model for human sexuality. But it also serves as a model for *poeisis* to the extent that the world God brings forth is one that is spoken as in the utterance "Let there be light." The poem "Mit allen Gedanken" pushes the analogy between *poeisis* and Creation to an extreme in claiming for itself the status of both a word and a thing:

Mit allen Gedanken ging ich
hinaus aus der Welt: da warst du,
du meine Leise, du meine Offne, und—
du empfingst uns.

Wer
sagt, daß uns alles erstarb,
da uns das Aug brach?
Alles erwachte, alles hob an.

Groß kam eine Sonne geschwommen, hell
standen ihr Seele und Seele entgegen, klar,
gebieterisch schwiegen sie ihr
ihre Bahn vor.

Leicht
tat sich dein Schoß auf, still
stieg ein Hauch in den Äther,
und was sich wölkte, wars nicht,
wars nicht Gestalt und von uns her,
wars nicht
so gut wie ein Name? (*GW,* 1:221)

[With all my thoughts I set
out from the world: there you were,
you, my quiet and open one and—
you received us.

Who
says that everything died for us
when our eyes dimmed?
Everything awoke, everything started up.

Great was the sun that swam forth, bright
the souls that stood opposite it. Clear,
commanding the way they showed the sun
its path in silence.

Gently
your womb opened up, calmly
a breath rose in the ether,
and what billowed like a cloud, was it not,
was it not a shape stemming from us,
was it not
as good as a name?]

"Mit allen Gedanken" would appear to be a love poem exclusively were it not for its final words, which introduce a self-reflexive element previously absent from the text. The feminine addressee of the poem gives birth to a cloud that is both a figure (*Gestalt*) and a "name," that is, an entity with shape and volume that is nonetheless a word.[19] For the medieval Kabbalists, as well as for their Christian counterparts to some extent, there was no distinction between word and thing since the basis for Creation was God's unpronounceable name, which they considered identical with God himself.[20] The poem invokes this tradition to create an alternative universe, a utopia in which the rift between the heavens and the earth is finally repaired.

In the first stanza the poem thus focuses on the speaker's departure from the world, as well as his reunion with his beloved, who would seem to wait for him in the air. Fred Lönker, among others, has argued that the addressee is modeled after the *Shekhinah,* the tenth of God's Sefiroth, which are arranged somewhat hierarchically.[21] Like the *Shekhinah,* she stands at the limit between two realms—the world the speaker leaves behind and the one he heads toward in the ether:

> Mit allen Gedanken ging ich
> hinaus aus der Welt: da warst du,
> du meine Leise, du meine Offne und—
> du empfingst uns.
>
> [With all my thoughts I set
> out from the world: there you were,
> you, my quiet, my open one and—
> you received us.]

At first glance the addressee would seem to be a completely passive figure like the *Shekhinah,* whose distinguishing feature according to Scholem is her receptivity or openness.[22] The addressee receives the speaker as he leaves the world "with all his thoughts," that is, with all that pertains to his spirit, which for the Kabbalists is divine and hence immortal. Yet the addressee does not only "receive" the speaker; she also "conceives" him, in a play on the two meanings of the verb *emfangen* cited in the fourth line of the text. This conception would seem to occur in reverse order. The speaker returns to his beloved in the first instance only to become the child she bears in her womb in the next. In *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* Scholem underscores that the *Shekhinah* is the mother of Israel but not its bride (230).[23] If she is the bride of anyone, it is God who impregnates her with the created world. Yet the dispo-

sition the Kabbalists hail as the one most suited to an encounter with God is a "continuous attachment" that is erotic in nature, in Hebrew *devekuth* (233). Humans approach God through a mystical union with the *Shekhinah* insofar as the *Shekhinah* is God's presence in the world, an angel of sorts.

The Sefiroth are not only God's emanations or aspects, as I have defined them thus far. They are also his ten names, which correspond to the first ten words of the Hebrew Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Each of these names derives from God's unpronounceable name, which is identical with God in himself, whom the Kabbalists also referred to as *En-Sof,* the infinite or endless.[24] In himself God is unknowable, but to the extent that he names and knows himself he can also be known under one of these aspects, each of which proceeds from the next. For this reason the first three Sefiroth constitute an upper realm that is closest to *En-Sof,* the infinite ground of all creation. With the third Sefira, however, there is a break in the chain since this Sefira contains all the remaining Sefiroth, whose number is pointedly seven.

Binah, the third Sefira, gives birth to the seven lower Sefiroth in what Scholem describes as a continual process, a process in which the Sefiroth that flow from her also return to her so that she may give birth to them again. In this manner she becomes the mother of the seven days of Creation, which first unfold in God to the extent that the creation in question here is not that of the physical world but that of God's person or face. Each Sefira, according to the Kabbalists, constitutes an organ or limb of the cosmic person of God, which is the one form in which he is accessible to creatures. The other metaphor for the Sefiroth is that of a tree, which is rooted in *En-Sof,* although En-Sof is not himself rooted in anything. *Binah*'s significance derives from the fact that she is the first to differentiate the forms present in God but not yet realized as individual things. She receives the seven lower Sefiroth in an undivided stream; she then differentiates among them as the intelligence of God, that is, as an expression of this aspect of his being.

The *Shekhinah* likewise receives a stream from above and gives birth to it in turn. But this act occurs only once since the creatures that flow from her cannot return to her, as they are not divine in substance: "The divine potency in all its purity flows from [the *Shekhinah*] only back into itself; what emerges from the lower *Shekhinah* is no longer God, but Creation" (Scholem, "Shekhinah," 175). It should be noted that Scholem's position on this final point is by no means consistent or clear. Elsewhere he argues that before the Fall there was no distinction between body and soul, as humans had yet to acquire bodies

(*Major Trends,* 231–32). And in his discussion of redemption he takes up this notion again, arguing that the Kabbalists understood redemption as the restoration of an original state in which heaven and earth were still connected ("Shekhinah," 176). This state was lost with the Fall, when not only humans were expelled from paradise but also the *Shekhinah,* who was literally cut from the tree of the Sefiroth. The *Shekhinah* can be restored to this tree only if humans return to her in spirit, or "with all their thoughts," as the poem puts it.

Until this happens, the *Shekhinah* accompanies Israel as an exiled part of God, that is, as a branch cut from God's eternal tree or a limb severed from his cosmic person. The name *Shekhinah* thus literally means the "presence" or "dwelling" of God, which is not as exalted a title as it may seem, as it says nothing about the *Shekhinah*'s particular features or powers (141ff.). And indeed she has none, according to Scholem. The *Shekhinah* is nothing but a vessel for God's emanative stream, which he releases in announcing his name or expressing his nature. In Celan's poem the speaker's return to the addressee thus sets a chain of events in motion that exceeds both him and her as individual figures. Once the speaker leaves the world, once the world dies for him, everything that until then had lain dormant in God comes to life again: "Everything awoke, everything started up."[25] In particular the speaker's departure from the world brings forth the sun, which serves as a symbol for an otherwise hidden God:

> Groß kam eine Sonne geschwommen, hell
> standen ihr Seele und Seele entgegen, klar,
> gebieterisch schwiegen sie ihr
> ihre Bahn vor.
>
> [Great was the sun which swam forth, bright
> the souls which stood opposite it. Clear,
> commanding the way they showed the sun
> its path in silence.]

The image of God as the sun is by no means an invention of this text. From the ancient Egyptian sun-god to Louis XIV, "le roi soleil," the sun has consistently stood as a figure for the king of the heavens. What is, however, unique to the poem is the subordination of the sun to the souls it meets in coming forth. These two souls direct the sun in a manner that is difficult to render in English, since the neologism *vorschweigen* plays on the more conventional verb *vorschreiben* (to proscribe or mandate in writing).[26] Through the medium of silence, rather than through writing, the souls direct the sun down a path that would seem to be preordained for it, as it belongs to the sun and nothing else.

This path is preordained insofar as it has been traveled once before. What the poem recounts is nothing other than the course of Creation as *written* in Genesis and elaborated on in the *Zohar* in the following fashion:

> In the beginning, when the will of the King began to take effect, he engraved signs into the divine aura which surrounded him. A dark flame sprang forth from the innermost recess of the Infinite, *En-Sof.* . . . In the innermost center of the flame a well sprang forth. . . . The well was entirely unrecognizable until under the impact of its explosion a hidden supernal point shone forth. Beyond this point nothing may be known or understood, and therefore it is called *Reshith,* that is "Beginning," the first word of creation. (Scholem, *Major Trends,* 218–19)

According to this passage, *Reshith,* or "beginning," is both a linguistic and a temporal instance. It is at once the point that bursts forth from the interior of God's flame, a point from which all Creation derives, including the Sefiroth or God's person. At the same time, it is the first word of the Torah, which the Kabbalists considered a mystical corpus, that is, a creation in its own right that is divine in substance. In this respect the word *beginning* not only marks the beginning of Creation. It is also the beginning of the unfolding of the Torah, the mystical corpus that for the Kabbalists was identical with the Sefiroth. What enables the beginning of Creation is hence the word *beginning.* This first sign engraved in the "divine aura" inaugurates a process that is at once spatial and linguistic. Significantly, the word *beginning* is not spoken in the Bible; it is not preceded by any preamble, such as "The Lord said." It appears out of nowhere as a solitary mark, a point beyond which "nothing may be known or understood" or *said.*[27] For *beginning* is the arbitrary point from which all creation proceeds, including the creation of language, which initially is not spoken but only written or engraved.

The poem likewise suggests that writing precedes speech in its variation on the motif of a light coming forth from the darkness. "Great was the sun which swam forth," we are told in what would appear to be a mere description of the sun as a "grand" or "majestic" ball that illuminates the sky. But insofar as "groß" (great) is *großgeschrieben* (capitalized), it also functions as an orthographic sign marking a grammatical beginning that is always writ large. This moment is more precisely a renewed beginning, a return to the first word of the Bible, which can be repeated innumerable times because it is written, because it is the fixed point from which all words (and things) follow. Even the manner in which the souls direct the sun assumes a kind of writing, for the in-

vented term *vorschweigen* would have no meaning were it not for its subtext, *vorschreiben* (to proscribe).[28] This subtext is not opposed to the silence of the souls; on the contrary, it is part and parcel of it. What it is distinct from is speech, which emerges at a later stage in Creation, that is, at a later stage in the differentiation of God's name, which is written but unpronounceable.

Speech emerges from the womb of *Binah,* who is not only the mother of the seven lower Sefiroth but also the soul in its purest form. In the Kabbalah the order of the Sefiroth is to some extent mirrored in the soul, which is divided into three categories, each of which possesses a different degree of purity. In its purest form the soul is called *neshuma* and is located in *Binah* as part of the undivided stream she receives from above; beneath *neshuma* stands *ruach,* spirit or wind; and at the bottom of this scheme stands *nefesh,* the breath or life force that animates all creatures (Scholem, *Major Trends,* 239ff.). This hierarchy is of significance for Celan's poem in that it structures the speaker's entire flight. In the first stanza he leaves the world to be united with the *Shekhinah;* in the second he begins his journey to the upper Sefiroth, which are now reconnected to the *Shekhinah;* in the third both he and the addressee encounter the "hidden supernal point" as souls housed in *Binah,* who is the last Sefira to have direct or unmediated contact with *En-Sof.* Once the sun comes forth, Creation can begin again as the migration of this single point down the Sefiroth tree. Scholem thus notes that the primordial point encapsulated in the word *beginning* is also the divine seed that is said to travel from the first to the third Sefira, where it is born as speech. In the *Zohar* this process is explained as follows:

> Hitherto, everything hung in the air, in the secret of *En-Sof.* But as soon as the energy permeated the Upper Palace [the womb of the upper mother, *Binah*], which has the secret name *Elohim,* speech is mentioned: "and *Elohim* spoke"— . . . "And God spoke"—now that "Palace" [i.e., the upper *Shekhinah*] gave birth, impregnated by the holy seed, and it gave birth in secret, that it not be heard at all. Once it was born, a voice is heard that is audible on the outside. (Scholem, "Shekhinah," 181)

Binah remains inaudible even if she gives birth to speech, for only in her womb does the seed that becomes the speech of Genesis ripen: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3–4). This seed is variously described as a light, a breath, and a word. It is each of these because for the Kabbalists the word is the basis for everything. What the poem accordingly holds secret—*verschweigt*—is the name of the vessel the sun meets, not because the vessel has no name but because its name is prior to the emergence of speech. Speech comes

about only through a process of differentiation in which God's unpronounceable name is articulated in ever more finite forms, such as *Lord* or *king*.

The fourth stanza of the poem recounts the final stage in this process, in which the speech of God becomes the speech of humans, which Scholem calls "articulated and differentiated expression" (*Major Trends,* 216). The addressee, who first received the speaker, returns as a mother giving birth. In other words, she delivers what she received from the speaker below and the sun up above:

> Leicht
> tat sich dein Schoß auf, still
> stieg ein Hauch in den Äther,
> und was sich wölkte, wars nicht,
> wars nicht Gestalt und von uns her,
> wars nicht
> so gut wie ein Name?
>
> [Gently
> your womb opened up, calmly
> a breath rose in the ether,
> and what billowed like a cloud, was it not,
> was it not a shape stemming from us,
> was it not
> as good as a name?]

In this stanza, as in the previous one, the poem draws attention to distinct moments or events through the insertion of adverbs at the beginning of each clause that literally punctuate the text ("great," "bright," "clear," "commanding," etc.). In this manner the poem is able to construct a sequence of events that resembles the chain of the Sefiroth, each of which proceeds from the next. From the "grand" arrival of the sun to the "calm" rising of a breath, the poem proceeds as if down a ladder to the bottom rung, which would at one level be the final line of the text. If there is a complication in this scheme, it is that the poem ends with an ascent. A breath rises from the womb of the *Shekhinah,* who represents the lowest rung of the cosmos sketched in the Kabbalah and this text.

Fred Lönker has argued that this breath must be understood in a biblical context as the spirit that hovers over the waters in the first two verses of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God [*ruach*] moved up the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:1–2).[29] Yet the word for spirit in Hebrew, *ruach,* means more a wind than a breath. More-

over, and this is crucial, the spirit or wind of God is not something spoken; it precedes the pronouncement "Let there be light" in the Bible. As a result, this wind can scarcely serve as a model for the breath that rises from the womb of the *Shekhinah,* the mother of the created world. The allusion in this stanza, I would argue, is to the second chapter of Genesis, in which God is said to bring man to life by blowing breath into him: "And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostril the breath of life, and man became a living soul [*nefesh*]" (Gen. 2:7). With this breath comes to completion not only the process of Creation but also the differentiation of God's name, such that his speech can become the speech of humans, that is, what they speak and embody simultaneously.

Man is a spoken word, an instance of speech himself since in Genesis he is literally spoken into being, created by means of an utterance: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). Because this utterance is finite, it can serve as the basis as well for the language humans speak in their separation from one another as well as from their environment. In Adamic language, as is often noted, the word is identical with the thing. Only with the Fall do they become related but separate entities. The poem "Mit allen Gedanken" seeks to restore this ideal state, not for the world as a whole but for a single being, which is finally the text itself. What pours into the addressee from above subsequently "billows like a cloud," which is in fact the phenomenon in the Kabbalah that is said to express God's presence in exile. As the Israelites left Egypt, God hid them beneath a cloud, which then settles over the tabernacle they build for him while in exile. In Exodus this tabernacle is identified as the dwelling of God: "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8–9). But in Kabbalist interpretation it is home to the *Shekhinah,* who is God's presence in the world and the cloud that hovers above it.[30]

The poem claims this status for its cloud as well, albeit in a manner that throws into question where this cloud is:

> und was sich wölkte, wars nicht,
> wars nicht Gestalt und von uns her,
> wars nicht
> so gut wie ein Name?
>
> [and what billowed like a cloud, was it not,
> was it not a shape come from us,
> was it not
> as good as a name?]

The precise nature of what rises from the addressee remains a question in the text. The speaker's repeated query "was it not?" draws attention to the absence of a category for this phenomenon. Yet the speaker does say something positive about this phenomenon in remarking that it "billows like a cloud." He indicates that it is murky, cloudy or ambiguous, which is a linguistic category. Words are murky not only when they hide their meaning but also when they make it plain, especially if this meaning is identical with the word, if it inheres in the word's articulation. For if the meaning of a word inheres only in its articulation, then it can never be revealed as it is unto itself, that is, as a self-sufficient entity apart from language.

Elliot Wolfson has argued that this paradox is central to the understanding of language in the medieval Kabbalah. The Sefiroth are articulations of God's unpronounceable name, which nonetheless remains unpronounceable because it can never be named, spoken, or said directly. Each pronouncement gives rise to another name, a veil in which God's name is revealed as something that can never be revealed, exposed, or unveiled.[31] What is born in the final stanza of the poem is likewise a veil, indeed a veil for nothing other than God's unpronounceable name. For the poem as a whole is "as good as a name," specifically the name *Bakol,* which in Hebrew means "with all" and is one of the names of the *Shekhinah,* according to Scholem ("Shekhinah," 168, 171). The poem "Mit allen Gedanken" not only begins with the words "with all." It is also *Bakol,* this figure and figuration of God's name, as the poem indicates in ending with the birth of cloud, which is the poem itself in all its murkiness. "Mit allen Gedanken" billows like a cloud from its bottom line. It rises up from its own end in order to trace its birth after the fact, its genesis as a name for God's unpronounceable name. For this reason the birth in the final stanza of the poem is represented as an ascent. What is born is a redeemed word, as well as a form that is delivered into God's person, a breath that is embodied in the poem and makes the poem into a bodily figure, "Gestalt."

This figure is not visible. Nor is it lasting in any proper sense. Rather it is reborn each time the reader picks up the poem and gives breath to what is written. This is because of the temporal structure of the poem, which is one of belatedness. The poem reveals what it is after the fact, after it has been born as a billowing form thanks to the breath of the reader. This breath sustains the poem until its end, when the reader is asked whether the poem was not "as good as a name." Only the reader can answer this question to the extent that he or she participates in the poem's birth as a figure invested with breath or soul, as well as a name for God's name. In the repeated question "was it not?"

(war es nicht?) a demand can thus be heard to preserve (*bewahren*) the memory of what the poem was until it comes again.

Building the Star of David

What "Mit allen Gedanken" explores as a spatial figure, the poem "Hüttenfenster" (Hut Window) explores as a place for the Jewish community, which after the Holocaust was displaced in more than one sense. The victims, as Uta Werner has argued, were denied a resting place, which in Hebrew and Yiddish has the added connotation of a home; in both languages the phrase for "cemetery," *beth olam,* literally means "house of eternity."[32] Even those who survived the camps, however, were also denied a place to the extent that they had no community to return to after the war, especially to the east. In the poem this loss is represented as a double loss—a loss as well of the heavens, which in the Kabbalah are identified with the Sefiroth as the limbs of God's person. The destruction of eastern European Jewry brought with it the destruction of this realm, which is necessary for Jewish existence or Jewish dwelling on earth. To this end the poem seeks to recreate a Jewish horizon. It seeks to restore a celestial sphere that could serve as the basis for the Jewish community even if it is remote and inaccessible.

The poem as a whole is structured as an arc. It begins with a darkened hut and ends with an illuminated house, representing a movement not only from a temporary to a permanent dwelling but also from an apparently empty dwelling to one that is inhabited:

> Das Aug, dunkel:
> als Hüttenfenster.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Beth,—das ist
> das Haus, wo der Tisch steht mit
> dem Licht und dem Licht. (*GW,* 1:278–79)
>
> [The eye, dark:
> as a hut window.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Beth,—that's
> the house, where the table is with
> the light and the light.]

At first the opening and closing lines would seem to be mirror images of each other. Light replaces darkness, a house a hut, and the view of an exterior gives way to the view of an interior with a table in the middle. Yet the two passages differ in one significant respect, which cannot be chalked up to their opposition as inversions of each other: the light in the final stanza is doubled. It is assigned two positions in space, which suggests that it is more than the inverse of darkness. The poem hints at the meaning of this light in referring to the Hebrew word for house, *beth,* which is also the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the number two, and the preposition *in,* as in the phrase "in the beginning." Because of this letter's position at the outset of the Bible, the Kabbalists speculated that Creation occurs in two places at once, as explained in the previous section. It occurs in God as the unfolding of his person, which is a never-ending process, and apart from him as the unfolding of the physical world, which is a finite process. Insofar as the light at the conclusion of the poem is doubled, the twofold nature of Creation would seem to be restored. An invisible light accompanies a visible light, a metaphysical plane an earthly one. Yet what enables this doubling is not a light from below but one from above. And it is this light, the light that for the Kabbalists flows from God, that is lacking at the outset of the poem.

What is missing, in other words, is the light that triggers the entire process of Creation—the flame that bursts forth from *En-Sof* to engender the Sefiroth, which in turn engender the world. In the absence of this light there can be no distinction between heaven and earth, since neither realm exists on its own or without this influx of divine energy. The first act of Creation is consequently the separation of heaven and earth. The sky becomes the source of light, which in turn illuminates the earth. The first image of "Hüttenfenster," however, is not that of the world in its primordial state. Rather it depicts a world in which the stars have fallen, as the term *disaster* suggests when broken apart into its root elements, dis/aster.[33] This world is gathered in an eye that one can neither look into nor look out from in its darkness:

> Das Aug, dunkel:
> als Hüttenfenster. Es sammelt,
> was Welt war, Welt bleibt: den Wander-
> Osten, die
> Schwebenden, die
> Menschen-und-Juden,
> das Volk-vom-Gewölk, magnetisch
> ziehts, mit Herzfingern, an

dir, Erde:
du kommst, du kommst,
wohnen werden wir, wohnen.

[The eye, dark:
as a hut window. It gathers
what was a world, remains a world: the wandering
east, the
floating ones, the
humans-and-Jews,
the folk-from-the-smoke, magnetically,
with heart fingers, it pulls on
you, Earth:
you're coming, you're coming,
we'll dwell at long last, dwell.]

What is perhaps most conspicuous in these opening lines is the analogy between an eye and the window of a hut, which recalls the commonplace that the eye is the window to the soul, in German *das Fenster zu Seele.* The relation of the eye to the soul is a matter I will come to shortly. For the time being suffice it to say that if the eye is a window, it borders on an interior space, which in turn explains what the eye does: it gathers "what was a world" and shelters it in darkness. This world is specifically a Jewish world. "[T]he wandering / east, the / floating ones, the / humans-and-Jews, / the folk-from-the-smoke" all refer to aspects of Jewish experience, with particular emphasis on the migration of eastern European Jews westward in the early twentieth century. *Ostjuden* were often called *Luftmenschen* by German Jews and anti-Semites alike, since they had no visible means of sustenance, no employment or livelihood, as Katja Garloff has noted.[34] The description of those gathered as the "floating ones" would seem to recall this term. Even Theodor Herzl referred to Jews who moved from place to place in search of work as "dieses schwebende Proletariat" (this floating proletariat).[35] Above all, however, the phrase "floating ones" recalls the fate of eastern European Jews, who were deported in large numbers to the camps and whose only grave often was "in the air" above smokestacks.[36]

Air, however, is also the element of the soul, or more broadly, all that is considered celestial, which is likewise of significance for the poem in its representation of Jewish history and experience. In what might seem like a macabre gesture the poem alludes at one and the same time to Kabbalist reflections on the Godhead and the Holocaust. Yet in this manner it also succeeds in raising the question what remains of a Jewish cosmos after the virtual annihilation of

the European Jewish community. Of note in this regard is that "the people from the cloud"—a more literal rendering of "das Volk-vom-Gewölk"—are gathered in a hut in what is at once an extension and a reversal of the story of the "cloud of glory" in Exodus. As mentioned above, the Kabbalists identified this cloud with the *Shekhinah,* who protected the Israelites as they fled Egypt. In so doing she kept them alive, whereas here the only people gathered are the dead, who were, if anything, abandoned by God. The place in which they are gathered, moreover, recalls this cloud. The word *Hütte* is included in the German name for the holiday Sukkot, *das Laubhüttenfest.* The holiday commemorates the cloud that accompanied the ancient Israelites as they wandered for forty years in the desert. On this holiday Jews are required to dwell in a *sukka,* which is likewise translated into German as *Hütte.* In the Luther Bible the command for this holiday, in Leviticus 23:42–33, reads:

> Sieben Tage sollt ihr in Laubhütten wohnen; wer einheimisch ist in Israel, der soll in Laubhütten wohnen, daß eure Nachkommen wissen, wie ich die Kinder Israel habe lassen in Hütten wohnen, da ich sie aus Ägyptenland führete.

In the King James Bible it reads:

> Ye shall dwell in booths seven days: all that are Israelites born, shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.

In the King James version the command is directed to "all that are Israelites born." Luther, by contrast, translates the phrase as "whoever is native to Israel." What the Luther version draws out, perhaps inadvertently, is the distinction between Israel as a physical and a metaphysical site in Jewish mysticism. One can be native to Israel even if one has never set foot there, since Israel is not so much a geographical site as a community that in congregating constitutes a place. It is this ephemeral collective site that is at issue in the poem to the extent that the dead, even if gathered in a hut, do not yet have a place to dwell: "we'll dwell at long last, dwell."

The symbol of Israel in the Kabbalah is the *Shekhinah,* who is, in Scholem's words, "the Gathering of Israel, in which everything is ingathered" (Scholem, "Shekhinah," 172).[37] Insofar as the eye of the poem gathers the dead, it functions in the same manner as the *Shekhinah,* who herself houses the soul of all

created beings, the spark that animates them. In this regard the cliché that the eye is a window to the soul does bear on the poem. The poem's eye offers a glimpse into the soul of Israel in its darkness, which suggests that the spark constituting the soul has died out. In some Kabbalist accounts this spark is said to stem directly from God, as, for instance, in a parable in which the *Shekhinah* is said to communicate with her father through a window that recalls the window in the poem's title: "He built a window between himself and her, and whenever the daughter needs the father and the father the daughter, they join one another through the window. Of this it is written: All glorious is the king's daughter within her palace; her raiment is interwoven with gold" (Scholem, "Shekhinah," 164). More often than not, however, the *Shekhinah* is said to receive God's light from the ninth Sefira, which the Kabbalists called the mystical east on the basis of the following prophecy in *Isaiah:* "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west" (43:5). As the sun moves from the east to the west, so too does God's light. The mystical east brings it to the mystical west, so that "all glorious is the king's daughter within her palace." In the case of Celan's poem, however, the princess is dark inside. In lieu of the mystical east she receives the wandering east, which is not what is yet to be born but what has already died. To ensure that the dead have an eternal home, a *beth olam,* the poem sends out something to find what, if anything, remains of God's light.

It literally sends "something" out into the universe. The poem refrains from giving this element another name besides "something," which is the opposite of nothing, or in Hegelian terms the negation of negation:

wohnen werden wir, wohnen, etwas

—ein Atem? ein Name?—

geht im Verwaisten umher,
tänzerisch, klobig,
die Engels-
schwinge, schwer von Unsichtbarem, am
wundgeschundenen Fuß, kopf-
lastig getrimmt
vom Schwarzhagel, der
auch dort fiel, in Witebsk,

. . . . . .

geht, geht umher,
sucht,

sucht unten,
sucht droben, fern, sucht
mit dem Auge, holt
Alpha Centauri herunter, Arktur, holt
den Strahl hinzu, aus den Gräbern.

[we'll dwell at long last, dwell, something

—a breath? a name?—

roams over orphaned ground
lightly, clodden,
heavy from something invisible
clinging to the wings
of its foot, skinned raw, weight stowed
in the head
from the black hail, which
fell there, too, in Vitebsk.

. . . . . .

roams, roams about,
searches,
searches below,
searches above, far, searches
with the eye, fetches
Alpha Centauri and Arcturus from above, fetches
to boot the ray from the graves.]

The poem conceals what is arguably its only active agent—"something"—in introducing it at the end of a line to which it does not belong grammatically. The wish to dwell belongs to the poem's "we," not to "something," which may be a grammatical agent but is not a subject of speech. As a result of this apparent misplacement, however, "something" also stands out. It stands out as something unwieldy, or in the poem's vocabulary, "clodden," that will not retreat into the background. In what follows, this clodden agent is described in terms reminiscent of the ninth and tenth Sefiroth, the mystical east and west. The *Shekhinah* is often referred to as the feet of God since she is the last of his emanations and stands closest to the earth. Before the Fall the Sefiroth were all connected to one another, "so that God permeated everything above and below," as is written in one Kabbalist text that interprets Isaiah 66:1: "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool" (Scholem, "Shekhinah," 177). With the Fall, however, the *Shekhinah* is cut from the chain. As a result, "the *Shekhinah* was *in suspenso* (literally, 'hanging in the air') and found no resting place

for [her] feet on earth, as in the beginning of Creation" (178). This condition persists "until David and Solomon came, and placed the *Shekhinah* on solid ground in the Temple of Jerusalem" (178). Once the temple is destroyed, however, the *Shekhinah* is condemned to wander again, even as far as the underworld, as one Kabbalist argued on the basis of Proverbs 5:5: "Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Hades."[38]

In the poem Hades becomes the war-torn landscape of eastern Europe as symbolized in the Lithuanian town of Vitebsk, the birthplace of the painter Marc Chagall.[39] One of the consistent motifs in Chagall's work is that of a picturesque *shtetl,* which belongs to a now-vanished world. Celan's poem indicates the fate of these shtetls through its roaming angel, whose foot is "skinned raw" as if it had walked over burning coals or through smoldering fields. Ironically the angel's wounded foot is the only body part intact. Both its wings and its head are wrent asunder by line breaks that split them from their modifiers: "Engels- / schwinge," "kopf- / lastig getrimmt." Finally as a figure whose weight is stowed in the head—*trimmen* is among other things an aeronautical term referring to the distribution of weight in a plane—this angel is a fallen angel. It flies headfirst toward the earth.

In order to be a fallen angel, however, it must have something to fall from. And it is this dimension, a heavenly kingdom or eternal house, that is lacking in the poem. The realm in which the poem's angel travels is "orphaned ground," perhaps because it has no father, as in the case of Jean Paul's "Rede des toten Christus." Yet "Hüttenfenster" still insists on the presence of divine sparks, even if not with the same conviction as the poem "Erratisch." The centrifugal force for such sparks is the *Tsaddik,* or Righteous One, that is, the ninth Sefira, associated with the mystical east. In Hasidism the *Tsaddik* became an increasingly important figure. The Hasidim believed that this Sefira could be embodied in rare individuals who were endowed with enormous powers. In particular the earthly *Tsaddik* had the capacity to gather and elevate the sparks embedded in all living things as the embodiment of God's unmitigated light.[40] In this manner he contributes to the redemption of the world; he restores what is divine to its place in the Sefiroth tree. What the poem calls "something" operates in this capacity as well. Indeed "something" would appear to be closer to the *Tsaddik* than to the *Shekhinah,* even if it has wings and feet, normally associated with the tenth emanation. For this nameless agent travels to the four corners of the earth to find what remains of God's light or presence. The poem thus emphasizes his movement in competing directions: above and below, near and far, south and north as represented by Alpha Cen-

tauri and Arcturus, which are the brightest stars in constellations at the southern and northern ends of the sky, respectively. The poem's *Tsaddik* travels to each of these places not to redeem the world but to reestablish a heavenly sphere above the earth.

He reestablishes the heavens in building a star that, as the poem later reveals, is the Star of David, the symbol of Judaism:

> geht zu Ghetto und Eden, pflückt
> das Sternbild zusammen, das er,
> der Mensch, zum Wohnen braucht, hier,
> unter Menschen.
>
> [goes to the ghetto and to Eden, plucks
> together the constellation, which he,
> man, needs to dwell here,
> among humans.]

If in the first stanza the poem's "we" expresses the wish to dwell, this stanza points to the conditions for dwelling: an arrangement of stars or a constellation. Only with this constellation in place can humans dwell with, or "among," other humans, which is a further condition for dwelling even if it is not accentuated in the poem. Human beings live in a community. In referring to communal dwelling, the poem invokes, as well as departs from, Heidegger's analysis of dwelling in the 1954 essay ". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . . ." The reference to Heidegger is by no means neutral, especially in the context of a poem that explicitly concerns Jewish suffering in the Holocaust. Celan's fascination with this one thinker cannot be understated. Heidegger's idiosyncratic philosophical vocabulary informs much of Celan's work. The priority Heidegger gives to the poet's word would no doubt have attracted Celan's attention, as would have his articulation of the ontological structure of finitude in *Being and Time*.[41] But Heidegger's failure to acknowledge the Holocaust and his refusal to grapple with his complicity with the National Socialists made him a deeply suspect figure for Celan, someone he could not dismiss but also someone he could not embrace wholeheartedly.

In the 1954 essay Heidegger pays little, if any, attention to the question whether humans live alone or among others. Of primary importance for him is that they do so beneath a sky that is rendered manifest in the poet's song. The source of Heidegger's reflections is predictably a poem by Hölderlin, "In lieblich Bläue," which some scholars have suggested may have been written not by Hölderlin but by a contemporary and acquaintance of his named Wil-

helm Waiblinger.[42] According to Heidegger, humans first establish a place for themselves in looking up at the sky, for in so doing they also take a measure of themselves. They compare themselves to something other. At first the basis for this comparison would seem to be the gods—"something heavenly," as Heidegger puts it, that may be immortal but has no claim to singularity: "Man, as man, has always measured himself with and against something heavenly."[43] Yet insofar as the measure that humans use in this process is an instrument and a standard at once, a singular principle is required, a principle Hölderlin's poem provides in the form of the God of monotheism.

"What is God?" Heidegger asks in reference to Hölderlin's text, which contains the following verses:

> Darf, wenn lauter Mühe das Leben, ein Mensch
> Aufschauen und sagen: so
> Will ich auch seyn? Ja. So lange die Freundlichkeit noch
> Am Herzen, die Reine, dauert, misset
> Nicht unglüklich der Mensch sich
> Mit der Gottheit. Ist unbekannt Gott?
> Ist er offenbar wie der Himmel? Dieses
> Glaub' ich eher. Des Menschen Maaß ist's.
>
> [May, if life is sheer toil, a man
> Lift his eyes and say: so
> I too wish to be? Yes. As long as Kindness,
> The Pure, still stays with his heart, man
> Not unhappily measures himself
> Against the godhead. Is God unknown?
> Is he manifest like the sky? I'd sooner
> Believe the latter. It's the measure of man.][44]

Comparing oneself to God in the poem is not an act of hubris; nor does it reduce God to one of any number of measures, since God has the peculiarity of being "unknown." Put otherwise, he is a measure that is immeasurable. At least this is Heidegger's interpretation of two apparently competing claims in Hölderlin's text, namely, that God is on the one hand "unknown" and on the other as "open" or "manifest" as the sky. Heidegger argues that he can be both at once because of the manner in which he reveals himself, which is as that which can never be revealed, made known, or unveiled: "For Hölderlin, God, as the one who he is, is unknown and it is just as *this Unknown One* that he is the measure for the poet" (". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . . ," 222). God can be a measure even if unknown because of the way in which he appears in the sky,

which is as that which is concealed or invisible: "God's appearance through the sky consists in a disclosing [*in einem Enthüllen*] that lets us see what conceals itself, but lets us see it not by seeking to wrest what is concealed out of its concealedness, but only by guarding the concealed in its self-concealment" (223; *V&A,* 191). While Heidegger does not entertain the question why God would appear at all, he does indicate that it is not God himself who is seen; rather what is visible is his shelter, or the appearance in which he takes refuge as an invisible being. This refuge is the open expanse of the sky. In appearing, God produces this vista as the shelter in which he hides.

In much the same way that the Kabbalists argued that God's name is unpronounceable, Heidegger argues that God's face is invisible. Each time God appears, he consequently does so behind a veil, even if that veil is something as open as the sky, which is familiar to all who dwell on earth. It is familiar to humans but foreign to God. Heidegger places particular emphasis on this point at the conclusion of his essay in order to explain what the poet does: "The poet calls, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure [*im Sichenthüllen*] causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed *as* that which conceals itself" (225; *V&A,* 194). The poet conjures what is strange or foreign to sight in order to take account of what lies in the heavens above. In so doing he provides the measure against which man measures himself. Man measures his ownmost capacity to be in looking up at the sky, which the poetic image makes visible as the refuge of a hidden and unknown God.[45] Seen in this light poetry is not an effect of dwelling but a condition for it, as well as the exemplary form of building from which follow all others, such as erecting a house and cultivating a field. Insofar as the poetic image reveals what is unknown, insofar as it "lets the invisible be seen" as something withheld from sight,[46] it enables man to survey the distance between heaven and earth, which is in fact the realm he inhabits. Man does not live in the earth but on top of it and beneath a sky, which is as impenetrable as the earth to the extent that it preserves its secret, which is to say that it remains a veil for the face of God.[47] Heidegger thus concludes his essay on an enigmatic note that might seem like an effort at poetry on his part, the remark that the "radiance of [the sky's] height is itself the darkness of its all-sheltering breadth" (". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . . ," 226).

"Hüttenfenster" likewise seeks out a symbol that expresses at one and the same time the sky's height and depth, its radiance and darkness. This symbol is the Star of David, which, properly speaking, is not a star at all but an image designed to "let the invisible be seen." The invisible in the poem is the light that the Sefiroth share with "whoever is native to Israel." In keeping with Heideg-

ger's argument, the poem constructs a Jewish cosmos, so that "humans-and-Jews"—a composite of a genus and species that could be translated as *Homo sapiens judaicus*—may dwell in a Jewish fashion. (I will explain what this means shortly.) In contrast to the heavens conceived by Heidegger, however, this cosmos must be built, or more precisely, built again, since it too counts as a house not for God but for the light he releases. "Something," we are told,

> baut ihn, den Davidsschild, läßt ihn
> aufflammen, einmal,
>
> läßt ihn erlöschen—da steht er,
> unsichtbar, steht
> bei Alpha und Aleph, bei Jud,
> bei den andern, bei
> allen: in
> dir,
>
> Beth,—das ist
> das Haus, wo der Tisch steht mit
>
> dem Licht und dem Licht.
>
> [builds it, the Star of David, lets it
> blaze, once,
>
> lets it burn out—there it is,
> invisible, there it stands
> next to Alpha and Aleph, next to Yid,
> next to the others, next
> to all: in
> you,
>
> Beth—that's
> the house, where the table is with
>
> the light and the light.]

The Star of David is ignited, only to be extinguished in the next breath. The mere fact that it flickers once, however, seems to suffice for all eternity. For only in disappearing does it become an invisible presence next to the Hebrew and Greek alphabets, which represent, *in nuce,* the historical movement of the Jews from the East (the Levant) to the West (Europe). The Latin letters of the poem could be said to be the final link in this chain, which runs from the Torah to the Septuagint to the Vulgate, as well as to this text. The poem, however, does not only comment on the Jewish diaspora in the letters it cites. It also points to the conditions for Jewish dwelling, for building a Jewish house.

The Hebrew letters *aleph* and *yod* are, among other things, the numbers one and ten, corresponding to the first and final Sefiroth, God's crown and feet, respectively. Insofar as the Star of David takes a place next to *aleph* and *yod,* it takes a place next to all ten Sefiroth, which are reconstituted here as a single entity, or in Kabbalist vocabulary, as the house of Creation.

This house above is mirrored in a residence below, as the poem indicates again in the letters *aleph* and *yod,* or more precisely, *aleph* and *yid.* The pejorative term *yid,* which in the Holocaust was not only a dismissive name but a death sentence, becomes in the poem a sign of the life of the Jewish community, its continued existence. A Jewish community consists of ten Israelites. Only when ten Jews congregate can certain rituals be performed, such as the recitation of the mourner's prayer or the weekly reading of the Torah. Ten Jews make up a house of Israel, which mirrors the house of Creation up above. Each of these needs the other, as the poem suggests in its final moments:

> in
> dir,
>
> Beth,—das ist
> das Haus, wo der Tisch steht mit
>
> dem Licht und dem Licht.
>
> [in
> you,
>
> Beth—that's
> the house, where the table is with
>
> the light and the light.]

In *Beth,* the house, the poem places all that is required for Jewish worship: a light that lives on in a community and, conversely, a community that lives in this illumination. Inside and outside meet in the word *Beth,* which could be interpreted as an abbreviation for *Beth El* (house of God), which is one of the names of the *Shekhinah,* according to Scholem. Indeed the image of an illuminated table would suggest just that, given the similarity of this table to the one in Trakl's "Ein Winterabend" (A Winter Evening), which Heidegger calls an "altar" as well as a "house of God":

> Wanderer tritt still herein;
> Schmerz versteinerte die Schwelle.
> Da erglänzt in reiner Helle
> Auf dem Tische Brot und Wein.

> [Wanderer quietly steps within;
> Pain has turned the threshold to stone.
> There lie, in limpid brightness shown,
> Upon the table bread and wine.][48]

Yet I would suggest that *Beth* refers to something more originary than either the "house of Israel" or the "house of Creation." It refers to the word *in,* which is the very first word of the Bible and which in Hebrew is designated with the consonant *beth.* What the poem inscribes "in / you: // Beth" is precisely the inaugural meaning of this letter. It makes *Beth* into a beginning again, from which all creation proceeds, that is, the Creation of the Sephirot and the Creation of the physical world. This, then, is the condition for Jewish dwelling. It is neither a house on earth nor the open expanse of the sky but a letter that at once conceals and contains the entire emanative force of an unknowable God. Celan links Kabbalist cosmogony and theogony in "Hüttenfenster" to create his own *beth olam:* an eternal house in which the dead have a place and in which an invisible light lives on.

The poems I have discussed are vested in Kabbalist astrology, which aligns the study of the stars with the study of God's person or anatomy. Scholem claims that one of the consequences of the notion of a cosmic person of God is a reversal of the traditional orders of the figurative and the literal. God's arm, he explains, is not a metaphor derived from human anatomy. Rather the human arm is a metaphor for God's, which in turn becomes the literal instance (*Major Trends,* 208). Poems such as "Mit allen Gedanken" rely on this reversal in order to claim that they are creatures, even if invisible, and that they have bodies, even if they only waft in the air. Equally important for Celan's poems is the assumed identity between God's person and his words and by extension the language of Creation, which is the source for all human language. This genealogy enables poems like "Erratisch" and "Hüttenfenster" to claim that they contain a spark that comes from another world. The priority of this other world comes at a cost, however. The human body can be redeemed only if it is stripped of its flesh and rendered invisible. Then, and only then, does it become part of the body of God. Celan's later work returns to the subject of anatomy. This time, however, the body in question refuses to be made immaterial. The aesthetic consequence of this refusal is an assault on the reader. Baudelaire perhaps summarized this strategy best in calling one of his most famous cycles "Spleen."

3 *The Dismembered Body*

In den Dunkelschlägen erfuhr ichs:
du lebst auf mich zu, dennoch,
im Steigrohr,
im
Steigrohr. "In den Dunkelschlägen"

In the dark beats I discovered:
you still gravitate toward me, albeit
in the rising pipe,
the
rising pipe. "In the dark beats"

Beginning with the collection *Atemwende,* Celan's poetry turns increasingly to the human body as a network of nerves, cells, and fibers, which together constitute the nervous system. Phrases such as *nerve cells, aortic arches,* and *stimuli bundles* turn up with astonishing frequency in the poems Celan wrote in the mid- and late 1960s, when he was hospitalized numerous times for severe depression. During that period he also submitted to electroshock treatment, a fact registered in several poems that are generally regarded as difficult, if not impenetrable.[1] Implicit in this characterization is a judgment concerning the merits of Celan's late work. George Steiner, for instance, suggests that Celan's late poems fail to reach the heights of his earlier poetry, as they are written in an idiom that is all but private.[2] Whether a language can ever be entirely private is not a matter I will discuss here. Suffice it to say that if Celan's late poetry is recognized as having an idiom, then that idiom is public already. We recognize that it is a language even if we scarcely understand it or, à la Wittgenstein, have yet to learn the rules of the game.

What interests me in Celan's late poetry is the representation of the body as a force field that is global in proportion, one that is in fact a world. Even a poem like "Magnetische Bläue" (Magnetic Blue), which Michael A. Bernstein rightly views in terms of Celan's biography,[3] treats the body as a space to be inhabited rather than as a form inhabiting space. The opening two lines of the

poem read: "Magnetische Bläue im Mund, / erkeuchst du Pol um Pol" (*GW,* 2:293) (Magnetic blue in the mouth, / you wheeze pole after pole). The poles referred to in the poem are first and foremost the positive and negative poles of electricity. At the same time they are also the earth's magnetic poles, that is, the North and South poles, which feature prominently in Celan's one prose statement about poetry, "Der Meridian" (The Meridian). There he likens poetry to a meridian, which circles the globe and in so doing connects what is divided not only in space but also in time, namely, different time zones:

> Ich finde etwas—wie die Sprache—Immaterielles, aber Irdisches, Terrestrisches, etwas Kreisförmiges, über die beiden Pole in sich selbst Zurückkehrendes und dabei—heitererweise—sogar die Tropen Durchkreuzendes—: ich finde . . . einen *Meridian.* (*GW,* 3:202, emphasis in original)
>
> [I find something—like language—immaterial, but earthly, terrestrial, something circular, which traverses the two poles and crosses back into itself and in so doing crosses—happily—even the tropics, the tropes: I find . . . a *meridian.*]

While the poem "Magnetische Bläue" is anything but "heiter" (happy), it nonetheless treats the body as a planet or sphere that serves as a medium for the jolts of memory.

In this chapter I consider Celan's maps of the body. The body, though seen from within, is projected as an external space that supports magnetic impulses and electric signals, which are the last vestiges of the soul in Celan's late work. In Celan's late poetry not only the body is fractured; the soul is as well insofar as it no longer has a celestial model to give it form as did the soul in the middle work. The Kabbalist figure of Adam Kadmon, the primordial man formed out of God's emanative stream, is itself dismembered in the late poems, as the frequent references to individual body parts indicate. In the absence of a transcendent model, there is no possibility of transcendence for the body. Stripped of this horizon, the body becomes a world unto itself. Its pain is hence the pain of a world. Celan put it as follows in one of his darker texts:

> In der Blasenkammer erwacht
> das Entatmete, der
> gefährliche Keimling,
>
> an seinem Krater-
> ende
> springt das Drittaug auf

und speit
Porphyr, auch
Pein. (*GW,* 2:292)

[In the blister chamber, something
unexpired awakens,
dangerous seedling,

at the edge of its
crater
the third eye opens up
and spits out
igneous rock,
pain too.]

God's Seed

Several poems in Celan's late work return to the doctrine of the Sefiroth only to question the existence of this realm as a metaphysical entity divorced from the flesh. Most notable in this regard is the poem "Aus Engelsmaterie" (Out of angel material), in the collection *Fadensonnen,* which invokes the figure of the *Tsaddik* in his most physical role as God's phallus:

Aus Engelsmaterie, am Tag
der Beseelung, phallisch
vereint im Einen
—Er, der Belebend-Gerechte, schlief dich mir zu,
Schwester—, aufwärts
strömend durch die Kanäle, hinauf
in die Wurzelkrone:
gescheitelt
stemmt sie uns hoch, gleich-ewig,
stehenden Hirns, ein Blitz
näht uns die Schädel zurecht, die Schalen
und alle
noch zu zersamenden Knochen:

vom Osten gestreut, einzubringen im Westen, gleich-ewig—,

wo diese Schrift brennt, nach dem
Dreivierteltod, vor
der herumwälzenden Rest-
seele, die sich

vor Kronenangst krümmt,
von urher. (*GW,* 2:196)

[Out of angel material, on the Day
of Ensouling, phallically
unified in the One
—He, the Animating-Righteous One, slept you, Sister,
over to me—flowing
upwards through the channels, up
to the Root-Crown:
parted
the crown hoists us up, co-eternal,
we, of the single standing brain, a lightning bolt
sews up our skulls, the bowls
and all
the other bones not yet ground into seed.

scattered from the east, to be gathered from the west, co-eternal

where this inscription burns, after the
three-quarter death, in front of the
restless, tattered soul,
which crouches
in fear of the crown,
from the beginning of the Beginning.][4]

The weight of the first stanza grows more apparent as the poem progresses, structured as it is like an upside-down triangle, with its apex at the base. The movement in the first stanza ends with the figure of all "bones not yet ground into seed." The soul, by contrast, appears in the final stanza as a remnant cowering in fear. In placing bones or physical remains up above and metaphysical remains below, the poem reverses the traditional hierarchy of flesh and spirit or body and soul. In keeping with this reversal, the body is said to be reconstituted as a whole, whereas the soul remains a part that has no possibility of becoming whole. It can never be complete owing to the nature of the event that it survives: a "three-quarter death," which presumably takes three-quarters of the soul with it. What remains is a fraction of the soul in exile from itself, much like the *Shekhinah,* who, Scholem repeatedly underscores, is an exiled part of God or even God in exile from himself. Why the poem would invoke the myth of the *Shekhinah* in its characterization of a soul that survives a partial death has to do with the uneasy relationship between things material and ethereal wedded in the title, "Aus Engelsmaterie."

In this respect the title of the poem is deceptive. It suggests a balance that the poem never achieves between the substance of the body and angels, who were considered pure forms in Kabbalist literature.[5] One of the few exceptions to this rule was Joseph Gikatilla, who according to Scholem believed that "angels consist of both soul and—albeit extremely subtle—matter" ("Tsaddik," 103), although Scholem never specifies what this matter is. He does, however, take up the idea of "subtle matter" again in his essay on the Kabbalist notion of the *tselem,* which both Jean Firges and Stephan Bleier argue is alluded to in the title of the text.[6] *Tselem* literally means "image," as in the phrase "God created man in his own image" in Genesis. The medieval Kabbalists interpreted this phrase to mean that each individual is born with a material body as well as an ethereal one, which resembles God.[7] This ethereal body, known as a *tselem,* serves as an intermediary between the physical body and the soul, which would otherwise be incompatible. It can negotiate between the two because of its fine substance, which is not flesh but air, specifically the air of paradise, which is where the *tselem* originates. In paradise the *tselem* drapes the soul so that it does not have to appear naked before God. And in creatures the *tselem* encircles the soul so that it does not have to mingle with the flesh, which is unholy.

The title "Aus Engelsmaterie" would in this regard suggest the substance of the *tselem.* (It is worth noting that the *tselem* is called an angel in several passages in the *Zohar* [see Scholem, "Tselem," 269].) Whether this figure is nonetheless of significance for the poem remains a question, since the poem opens with a series of modifying clauses that are never referred to a subject. In other words, the poem never says who or what is made "of angel material" or who swims upwards "through the channels," to cite another example. It does, however, identify a moment that is prominent in Scholem's essay as well: the day of "conception," "animation," or "ensouling," depending on how one translates "Beseelung." In two passages in the *Zohar,* the *tselem* is said to emerge during intercourse, or what is euphemistically called *Beischlaf* in German, a euphemism that informs the invented verb *zuschlafen* in the fourth verse. The first passage reads:

> When a man begins to consecrate himself before intercourse with his wife with a sacred intention, a holy spirit is aroused above him, composed of both male and female. And the Holy One, blessed be He, directs an emissary who is in charge of human embryos, and assigns to him this particular spirit, and indicates to him the place to which it should be entrusted. . . .

> And the Holy One, blessed be He, then gives this spirit all the commands that He wishes to give. . . . Then the spirit descends together with the image, the one in whose likeness [the spirit] existed above. With this image [man] grows; with this image he moves through the world. This is the meaning of "Surely man walks with an image" (Ps. 39:7). While this image is with him man survives in the world. (quoted in Scholem, "Tselem," 263)

The second reads:

> We found in the [legendary] *Book of King Solomon* that, at the moment of intercourse below, the Holy One, blessed be he, sends a likeness that has the physiognomy of the person [about to be formed] imprinted and etched upon this image, and it stands over the [act of] intercourse. And were the eye allowed to see [that is, were man's spiritual perception more refined], he would observe above his head an image formed like the physiognomy of [that] person, and in that same image man is created. But so long as this image that his Master has sent does not hover over his head and is not present, no human being can be created [from this intercourse]. . . . At the moment when the spirits [meant to enter human beings] leave their place, each one dresses itself before the Holy King in splendid shapes, corresponding to the physiognomy with which it will exist in this world, and from that same primal image emerges the *tselem.* (265–66)

While the distinction between spirit and image in these two passages remains somewhat opaque, both indicate that the act of intercourse has a direct effect on what happens in the heavens. A holy spirit or image forms in the sky the moment a man makes love to his wife. Celan's poem pushes this model of influence to a new extreme. The reciprocal exchange between realms becomes in his text a direct correspondence, a form of mirroring. As humans mate with one another, so too does God, who is divided into a male and a female principle.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the last two Sefiroth represent opposing dimensions of the Godhead. The *Tsaddik,* or Righteous One, is his life-giving force; the *Shekhinah,* his fertility and receptacle. Anatomically the *Tsaddik* constitutes God's phallus, and the *Shekhinah,* his womb. Their union gives rise to the created world, which issues from the *Shekhinah,* who is also the lowest member of God's person. (Thus she is sometimes referred to as his feet.) Scholem argues that the union of the *Tsaddik* and the *Shekhinah* serves as a model for human sexuality. Humans procreate in much the same manner as God creates: by depositing a seed in the lap of a woman. Nowhere, however,

does Scholem mention the *tselem* in connection with the *Tsaddik* and the *Shekhinah.* This is an invention of the poem, which combines two myths to question the supremacy of spirit over matter and finally the fruitfulness of divine intercourse.

The poem's allusions to the *Tsaddik* are explicit, if also less orthodox than they may seem, beginning with his name, Righteous One, which in the poem is not only translated but also expanded to include a predicate:

> Aus Engelsmaterie, am Tag
> der Beseelung, phallisch
> vereint im Einen
> —Er, der Belebend-Gerechte, schlief dich mir zu,
> Schwester—, aufwärts
> strömend durch die Kanäle, hinauf
> in die Wurzelkrone.
>
> [Out of angel material, on the Day
> of Ensouling, phallically
> unified in the One
> —He, the Animating-Righteous One, slept you, Sister,
> over to me—flowing
> upwards through the channels, up
> to the Root-Crown.]

The *Tsaddik* is introduced in what is arguably an interruption in the text, a sentence set off with dashes from the modifying clauses surrounding it. This sentence, moreover, is written in the past tense, which puts it at odds with the present-tense phrase "flowing upwards" immediately following it. As a result of this opposition, however, the sentence is also able to explain who serves as the subject of the opening sequence. The lovers whom the *Tsaddik* "slept" together are the party now "unified in the One." Together they form the body made "of angel material" that floats "upwards through the channels." They do so not as two figures placed together but as one entity. An alternate translation of the third line is "One-ed [*ver*ein*t*] in the One (Ein*en*)," which is probably more accurate, if also more awkward. Above all, however, it is the mode in which they are brought together that attests to their convergence as one. The *Tsaddik,* or "Animating-Righteous One," sleeps the one over to the other (*zuschlafen*) so that they may now enjoy *den Beischlaf* (sexual intercourse).

Since Plato's *Symposium,* if not before, sexual union has been understood as a return to a prior state when the sexes were not yet divided.[8] Aristophanes famously argues that the earth was once inhabited by a race of hermaphrodites,

who were split apart only to long for one another as separated halves. The myth of the *tselem* posits this ideal as well insofar as the *tselem* is "composed of both male and female." To the extent that the speaker and addressee are "slept over" to one another, they would seem to achieve this state. At the same time, their union attests to a division in God, which the poem only partially conceals. According to Kabbalist eschatology, the *Tsaddik* and the *Shekhinah* were separated from each other after the destruction of the temple, when the *Shekhinah* was sent into exile with Israel. The two will be united again only at the time of redemption, when the stream of life will flow continually from the *Tsaddik* to the *Shekhinah* and through her into Creation.[9]

Although this is the general framework for history in Kabbalist thought, the model allows for some variation. Humans contribute to the wholeness of God by observing the law and especially by being fruitful in marriage. Scholem points to the latter example specifically when explaining the "magical rapport" between realms ("Tsaddik," 111). Humans draw out or arouse an influx from above when they act in a manner consistent with the law. This influx comes from the *Tsaddik,* who moves, guides, and animates Creation, so that Creation may return to God a reflection of himself.[10] Scholem writes that "the quintessential symbol of this rapport is the union of *Tsaddik* and *Shekhinah* based upon the arousal of procreativity in sexual union between male and female" ("Tsaddik," 111). When this state is achieved, peace reigns in the world. The channels connecting all the Sefiroth open up, as do the channels connecting Creation with the Creator. Scholem thus emphasizes that the word for "peace" in Hebrew also means "complete" or "whole" (110). The union of opposites on earth leads to a union of opposing spheres in and as the One.

Although the poem gestures at such a state in the phrase "one-ed in the One," it also immediately undermines it by identifying a particular aspect of God's being. God is the One as well as the *Tsaddik,* the Animating-Righteous influx. More forcefully, he is indivisible except when divided into particular aspects or personae. Even if his division is treated as something from the past—the Animating-Righteous One sleeps the two lovers together prior to their union in the One—the persistence of a name for an aspect of his being suggests that the world is not yet whole or "one-ed in the One." What is lacking is precisely a receptacle for God's seed, which emerges from the "Root-Crown," which is God's head as well as his penis.

Crown is the name of the first Sefirah.[11] To the extent that all the other Sefiroth proceed from it, it is also the root of the Sefiroth tree, as the poem "In der Luft" (In the air) underscores: "In der Luft, da bleibt deine Wurzel, da, / in

der Luft" (*GW,* 1:290) (In the air, there your root remains, there / in the air). At the same time the root for the German word *Wurzel* (root) is the Latin word *vallus* (stake), which constitutes a homonym with the Greek *phallos.*[12] In both German and English anatomy books the ring around the top of the penis is called the "corona," or crown.[13] The corona forms the anterior rim of the glans penis, whose name literally means "acorn of the penis"—hence, the German *Eichel des Penis*—and as such is related to the botanical sense of root. Yet if anything links the root and the crown, it is the Kabbalist anatomy of God, which posits a direct connection between the brain and the penis. The sixteenth-century mystic Meir ibn Gabbai writes, "The seed is drawn from the brain and reaches the tip of the phallus, and is emptied into its mate; that is the secret of its bearing fruit, by way of the mystery of true union and unification" (quoted in Scholem, "Tsaddik," 113). If in the poem the movement is upwards rather than downwards to the tip of the phallus, it is because the phallus stands erect like a column, which is in fact another symbol for the *Tsaddik.*[14] Like the trunk of a tree, which stretches from the root to the crown and encompasses both, the *Tsaddik* is the pillar that runs through the world of the Sefiroth.

It is from this column that the lovers emerge, as if God himself had ejaculated:

> gescheitelt
> stemmt sie [die Wurzelkrone] uns hoch, gleich-ewig,
> stehenden Hirns, ein Blitz
> näht uns die Schädel zurecht, die Schalen
> und alle
> noch zu zersamenden Knochen
>
> [parted
> the crown hoists us up, co-eternal,
> we, of the single standing brain, a lightning bolt
> sews up our skulls, the bowls
> and all
> the other bones not yet ground into seed.]

Given the buildup to this moment in the poem, the emphasis on fluidity and vertical movement, the entity that emerges from the root crown is a surprise, if not a reversal of all expectations. In lieu of a germinating seed, the crown spits out physical remains, specifically bones that are "sewn" together to form the sutures on the skull, in German *die Nähte* or *Nahtstellen.* Anatomically this is consistent with the formation of the skull after birth, when the pieces that

compose it harden into a whole with a seam, or part (*Scheitel*), in the middle, as the figure of a "parted" (gescheitelt) crown suggests. Yet for all the anatomical specificity of this passage, there remains something disconcerting in the poem's emphasis on a skull, which is the classic memento mori, or reminder of death, in Western art. The bones in question are not born but assembled from the dead. They are remains that are recycled to form a prototype, a skeleton as *tselem.* At issue in the poem is not whether life can be created from nothing but whether it can be resurrected from death, as the allusion to two different legends here suggests.

The first is to Deucalion and Pyrrha, the sole survivors of a flood, who are commanded by an oracle to cast the bones of Pyrrha's mother onto the earth so that they may grow into human beings. Fearing that such an act would be a desecration of the dead, Pyrrha and Deucalion decide instead to throw stones, which they interpret allegorically as the bones of the earth. From these stones emerges a new race of men and women who are supposedly hardier than their predecessors. Stephan Bleier has argued that this myth is at play in the poem in the figure of "bones not yet ground into seed," which resonates with lines in an early work by Celan originally entitled "Deukalion und Pyrrha" and later renamed "Spät und Tief": "Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung, / ihr setzet es vor unsern Brüdern und Schwestern" (*GW,* 1:35) (You grind in the mills of death the white flour of the promise / you set it in front of our brothers and sisters).[15] He shows that the phrase "Mühlen des Todes" comes from a common if somewhat too literal translation of the English phrase for the camps *death mills.*[16] The lines quoted above constitute a retort to the accusation that the collective speaker of the poem blasphemes in saying, among other things, "Wir schwören bei Christus dem Neuen, den Staub zu vermählen dem Staube" (*GW,* 1:35) (We swear by the new Christ to marry dust to dust). The punishment for marrying dust to dust in the name of Christ is the pulverization of both bones and the messianic promise; *vermählen* (to marry) and *mahlen* (to grind) are orthographically, if not etymologically, related. For Bleier, what the poem "Aus Engelsmaterie" projects as an event to come is the annihilation of human remains, which was in fact a regular practice in the camps. Significant in this regard is that the last two words of the stanza, "zersamenden Knochen," form the initials *ZK,* which is a mirror image of the abbreviation for concentration camps in German, *KZ.* In Bleier's view the anticipation of annihilation coincides hauntingly with the anticipation of a loss of boundaries in the poem, a loss due to sexual excitement. *Vermählung* (marriage), in other words, remains

bound to *mahlen* (grinding), procreation to annihilation, as captured in the following lines from "In Prag": "Knochen-Hebräisch, / zu Sperma zermahlen" (*GW,* 2:63) (Bone-Hebrew, ground into sperm).

Yet the invented term "zersamen" need not be read exclusively as an obliteration of all remains. It is also a literal translation of the verb to disseminate, which etymologically means "to scatter seed." The prefix *zer* corresponds to the Latin *dis* (apart), and *samen* corresponds to the Latin *seminare* (to sow). What the poem in this regard predicts is that the bones it gathers will be spread as seed. This is where it both alludes to the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha and departs from it, since the question of the poem is whether bone can in fact become seed, that is, whether it can ever yield fruit, or produce life, as in the Greek legend. This question is central to the second legend at play in the poem's image of a skull sewn together, that of the Valley of Dry Bones in chapter 37 of Ezekiel. In the text Ezekiel is lead to a field full of dry bones that represent the bones of Israel (37:11). God commands him, "Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (37:4–7). Ezekiel does as commanded, "and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone" (37:7). He then calls on the wind to "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (37:9). The word for wind in Hebrew, *ruach,* is the same as that for breath. Both represent the animating force, the seed of life that revives dead bones and thus enables Israel to rise from the grave.

In Celan's poem this prophetic vision is turned on its head. Israel remains, as it were, buried in the grave, since the only seed the poem can imagine is itself inanimate. It is the dust of bones buried in the sky, which is the gravesite of the poem, the valley prophesied in Ezekiel. In the biblical text this valley is primarily allegorical. It represents the punishment that the Israelites will face before God restores them to the promised land and resurrects their dead. Then, and only then, will his "tabernacle [i.e., his presence, or in Hebrew, his *Shekhinah*]. . . be with them" (37:27). In the poem this tabernacle persists, although the heavens have been laid to waste, as the poem indicates in its final two stanzas, whose tone contrasts sharply with the exultant tone of the opening verses:

vom Osten gestreut, einzubringen im Westen, gleich-ewig—,

wo diese Schrift brennt, nach dem
Dreivierteltod, vor
der herumwälzenden Rest-
seele, die sich
vor Kronenangst krümmt,
von urher.

[scattered from the east, to be gathered from the west, co-eternal

where this inscription burns, after the
three-quarter death, in front of the
restless, tattered soul,
which crouches
in fear of the crown,
from the beginning of the Beginning.]

The first line of this passage is a variation on the prophecy in Isaiah, "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west" (43:5), which Scholem cites in his essay on the *Tsaddik* ("Tsaddik," 93). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the *Tsaddik* is the mystical east, and the *Shekhinah,* the mystical west. The two came to represent opposing directions when the *Shekhinah* was sent into exile with Israel. What the passage from Isaiah prophesies is Israel's and the *Shekhinah*'s return—Israel to the promised land and the *Shekhinah* to the *Tsaddik.* The latter ensures the life of the world, since the seed of God can once again pour into the *Shekhinah,* and through her into Creation.

In the poem this final stage never comes to pass. Moreover, its very possibility is called into question through the insertion of the word "co-eternal" at the end of the second stanza. East and west are co-eternal insofar as they remain separate. Were the two united as one, they would simply be eternal; in other words, the predicate would not have to be applied to each. The similarity of the two, then, is also a mark of their difference, which comes to the foreground in the final stanza. In lieu of an upright column, the stanza presents a soul bent in fear. This soul, moreover, is fragmentary, in contrast to the skull reconstituted at the end of the first stanza. Finally the soul lives, even if its driving force is fear, in contrast to the bones of the first stanza, which can be disseminated but can never inseminate anything. The dividing line between the two is precisely the messianic promise from Isaiah: that the world will be made whole once the *Shekhinah* is restored to the Sefiroth tree. If the promise is divisive, it is because the world of the poem has been turned upside down. In-

deed, few texts bear out more than this one Celan's observation in "Der Meridian": "Ladies and Gentlemen, whoever walks on his head has the heavens underneath him as an abyss" (*GW,* 3:195).

The heaven of the poem is an abyss insofar as it is a grave. It is the expanse in which all inanimate, material remains are buried. At issue in the poem, however, is not merely a reversal of heaven and earth, whereby the one takes the place of the other, but whether there can ever be a renewal of Creation, a divine influx that inspires the poet and enlivens Creation. It is this concern that returns the poem to the Kabbalah and in particular to a passage written by Joseph Gikatilla:

> When it [the attribute of the *Tsaddik*] sees that human beings are contaminating themselves, rejecting the Torah and commandments and performing evil and injustice and violence, the attribute of *Tsaddik* is gathered into itself and withdraws high above; then all the channels and streams drawing down cease, and the attribute of Adonai [i.e., the *Shekhinah*] remains as a dry and empty earth and lacking in everything. (Scholem, "Tsaddik," 112)

For the poem it is not the earth that dries up but the heavens. The remaining vestige of a soul withdraws into itself after a three-quarter death, which is the poem's most explicit reference to the Holocaust.[17] The punishment prophesied in Ezekiel has to this extent already occurred. And its consequences are felt as much in heaven as on earth. For without any arousal from below there can be no arousal above. The poem pushes the idea of the magical rapport between spheres to one of divine dependency. The Godhead needs to see itself reflected in the lower sphere in order to flow with life. Only then can it spill over into the created world as a divine influx. Without this reflection, however, the upper sphere dries up. This is Celan's addition to Kabbalist theogony and cosmogony after the Holocaust.

As a result of the "three-quarter death" of the soul none of the unions in the poem bear fruit. Indeed, it is questionable whether there ever was an addressee who was anything more than a figment of the speaker's imagination. The manner in which he is united with her already suggests her absence. She is "slept over to" him, as if she were a figure in a dream. Simone Schmitz suggests that she is a figure for all the victims of the Holocaust based on the function of the sister in many of Celan's texts.[18] Only in the final stanza, however, does the poem make her absence plain in the image of a solitary soul tossing and turning in anxiety. Because the word for soul is feminine in German, it would at first seem as if the soul were an extension of the sister, who in turn parallels

the *Shekhinah.* The *Shekhinah*'s role, moreover, as an exiled part of God would contribute to the impression that this restless, wandering soul refers to the speaker's beloved. Yet such a reading mistakes the profound disappointment of the speaker in the poem, who awakens from what was possibly a wet dream to discover that he is alone. In other words, he has no mate in which to plant his seed, as the *Tsaddik* no longer has the *Shekhinah* to inseminate. The rapture at the outset of the poem thus becomes fear—fear that union is possible only in death, in the valley of dry bones above the earth.

The poem is in this regard the account of a failed birth. No influx inspires the poet, nor does he arouse the heavenly sphere. Neither form of "Beseelung" (conception, animation) is possible because the heavens are themselves *entseelt* (soulless, dead). What the poem consequently documents is not the power but the impotence of its words to conjure the spirit of a beloved, who is missing, if not dead. The poem cannot conjure this spirit since it has only the letter at hand—the letter of scripture first and foremost, but also the letters of any other written form, including the text. The letter awakens a desire that it cannot fulfill for a union in the One, which is also a union above and beyond script. This union transcends the written word, since writing invariably divides what it names into the one and the other, which is the root of all the other distinctions in the text (e.g., east and west, male and female, *Tsaddik* and *Shekhinah,* the living and the dead). For this reason, the writing of scripture in the poem is said to burn. It burns with a desire for the day when it will be superfluous. This writing is etched not only on paper but in the flesh, specifically in the crown of the penis, which is where the cut of circumcision is made. In the poem "Haut Mal" the circumcised phallus is at issue again, in particular as it appears in the Epistles of Paul, whose theology hinges on the distinction between letter and spirit. Paul, moreover, is rumored to have suffered from *le haut mal,* a somewhat antiquated expression in French for epilepsy.

Two Pauls

"Haut Mal" is first and foremost a love poem, albeit one that relies on Paulinian terms. The flesh is depicted as something accursed in need of sanctification:

> *Haut Mal*
>
> Unentsühnte,
> Schlafsüchtige,
> von den Göttern Befleckte:

deine Zunge is rußig,
dein Harn schwarz,
wassergallig dein Stuhl,

du führst,
wie ich,
unzüchtige Reden,

du setzt einen Fuß vor den andern,
legst eine Hand auf die andre,
schmiegst dich in Ziegenfell,

du beheiligst
mein Glied. (*GW,* 2:220)

[O irredeemable
friend, sleep-deprived,
tainted by the gods:

your tongue is sooty,
your urine black,
your stool a bilious liquefaction,

like myself,
you use
foul language;

you put one foot before the other,
lay one hand atop the other,
burrow into goatskin,

consecrate
my virile member.][19]

The poem is framed by two extremes: the evil or affliction ("[le] mal") named in the title and the blessing or sanctification ("Heiligung") that comes in the penultimate verse. Between the two stands the act of speech. In the third stanza, which also forms the very middle of the text, the speaker notes that "you," "like myself," "use / foul language." The poem's "you" and "I" resemble each other in their speech, if not in their physical being as a man and a woman. For the addressee would appear to be a woman, since the poem's apostrophes are all declined in the feminine, which is a marker in German that has no equivalent in English. Yet the title opens up another possibility. "Haut Mal" need not be read only in French; it can be interpreted in German as well as a variation on *[das] Hautmal* (flesh mark), which is an invented term but

which has a strong precedent in such expressions as *Denkmal* (monument) or *Muttermal* (birth mark). According to Kluge's etymological dictionary, which Celan is known to have consulted along with Grimm's dictionary, *Haut* (flesh) and *Hode* (testicles) share the same root; both derive from the Indo-European **(s)keu,* meaning "to cover" or "to drape."[20] Indeed, the editors of the dictionary go so far as to suggest that *Haut* and *Hode* are based in the Cymric word for scrotum. The mark, or "Mal," at issue in the poem thus refers to the male member. And this reference in turn calls into question whether the apostrophized subject of the poem, though feminine, is necessarily female. For "Unentsühnte" (irredeemable, unexpiated) could signify equally well *eine unentsühnte Frau* or *eine unentsühnte Person* (an irredeemable woman or person). If the latter merits attention, it is because the ghost of Paul haunts each and every word of the text from the title to the final verse.

The notion of something irredeemable and stained plays a central role in Paul's thought, in particular concerning the meaning of Mosaic Law. In his account the law would at first seem to be the source of sin, as, for instance, in chapter 7 of Romans, where Paul states, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (7:9). Paul cautions, however, that the law is not itself sinful; rather it is the desire the law awakens for something that it expressly forbids in a circular process that would seem to anticipate Freud's analysis of taboos and prohibitions. The law awakens impure thoughts in us since we are made not only of spirit but also of flesh. For Paul, man is divided between his reason, or spiritual self, and his unspiritual nature, or flesh. The latter causes man to violate the law, which in itself is holy, as Paul later underscores. Because man is divided, in Paul's words, "what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" (Rom. 7:15). Christ provides the resolution to this otherwise irresolvable conflict in the self: "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (Rom. 6:9–10). Christ dies as a man, subject to sin, only to be resurrected as the Son of God, freed of the taint of sin. Through his sacrifice we are all "delivered from the law" (Rom. 7:6), providing that we serve God "in the newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6).

The idea of following the spirit of the law rather than the letter has long been considered the basis of the distinction between Christianity and Judaism, at least as the latter is conceived in the New Testament. Yet Paul is arguably more concerned with the body than with the spirit, in particular with the

body of Christ, which we are all said to join in heeding the spirit within us. As Paul would have it, we each die with Christ in order to come to life again in him. In so doing we form a single body, the body of Christ, which is the collective soul of all believers: "For as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Rom. 12:4–5). We form this one spiritual body in carrying out "the law written in [our] hearts" (Rom. 2:15) as opposed to the law written in the flesh, namely, the circumcision of the penis, to which Paul returns with astonishing frequency in his Epistles. Indeed, he treats this law as a symbol for the entire legal code, which consists of 613 commandments. Admittedly the rite of circumcision is assigned a certain priority in the Old Testament insofar as it is the first law given to Abraham and marks God's covenant with the Hebrews. But what troubles Paul most is that this law is inscribed in "sinful" flesh, and furthermore in or on the organ most closely associated with sexual desire. Paul thus argues with extra urgency, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28–29). Only those circumcised "by faith" (Rom. 3:30) participate in both Jesus's death and everlasting life. God designed him, Paul tells us, "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:25). Whether blood can ever be sacrificial is the question of "Haut Mal," which focuses on a body that is not only afflicted with disease but utterly forsaken.

From the sooty tongue to the watery stool of the addressee, the body is presented as a liquid mass decaying from both without and within:

> deine Zunge is rußig,
> dein Harn schwarz,
> wassergallig dein Stuhl.
>
> [your tongue is sooty,
> your urine black,
> your stool a bilious liquefaction.]

Each of these symptoms casts a new light on Paul's statement, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor. 12:7). Paul's bruised body becomes in the poem a body stained by

the gods, which is itself an evil notion for Paul, who reserves as much wrath for the Jews as he does for pagans or polytheists. The stain of the body produces "unzüchtige Reden" (foul language) as opposed to inspired speech. Or rather, what Paul calls "ecstatic speech," speaking in tongues, becomes a sign of possession not by *the* spirit but by evil spirits. Untamed or foul are the words that pour forth from an untamed body, which resembles that of the patient in Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," whose only noteworthy feature is his blackened tongue, which eventually dissolves with his body into "a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putridity."[21]

Yet the main concern of the poem is hardly the body's decay. "Haut Mal" is not gothic in the same manner as Poe's story. It does not see in the grotesque a possibility for the sublime. Rather its interest lies in a usurpation of the law, which makes a mark in the flesh secondary to a mark in the heart. For this reason the poem must represent the body in its most ill and feeble state. Only then does it come to the foreground as that which is dismissed and maligned in Paul's thought. It is precisely in the act of blessing—a blessing made over the speaker's "member"—that the poem classifies Paul as a usurper:

> du setzt einen Fuß vor den andern,
> legst eine Hand auf die andre,
> schmiegst dich in Ziegenfell,
>
> du beheiligst
> mein Glied.
>
> [you put one foot before the other,
> lay one hand atop the other,
> burrow into goatskin,
>
> consecrate
> my virile member.]

As Ananias cured Paul of blindness and then Paul cured the ill in Acts, the subject of the poem takes a step and places "one hand atop the other" in a gesture of blessing. What is perhaps unusual in this case is that the blessing is made over the self. Instead of laying two hands on another person, the subject lays one hand on top of the other, thereby blessing himself. Here is where Paul of Tarsus and Paul Celan meet and merge as one. It is one Paul, however, divided into two aspects, as the allusion that follows suggests. To the extent that the addressee covers himself in goatskin, he behaves like Jacob, who famously covered his own hands in goatskin in order to receive the blessing Isaac in-

tended for Jacob's elder brother, Esau. (The Hebrew name Esau is related to hair.) In this manner Jacob usurps Esau's birthright, becoming the father of the nation of Israel. Esau's descendents are, by contrast, the Edomites, who are usually considered Israel's enemies, in particular the Christians.

In the poem, however, Paul Celan, the Jew, and Paul the disciple of Christ are aligned with inverse biblical figures. Paul Celan becomes Esau, the elder son, whose birthright is stolen by Jacob, as represented by Paul of Tarsus. In other words, Paul of Tarsus is treated as the usurper who steals God's covenant.

"Haut Mal" is not the only poem in Celan's *oeuvre* that identifies the Jews with Esau. Already in "Stimmen" (Voices), the cycle that opens *Sprachgitter,* the Jews are identified with the brother who is usually considered the father of Israel's enemies:

> *Jakobsstimme:*
>
> Die Tränen.
> Die Tränen im Bruderaug.
> Eine blieb hängen, wuchs.
> Wir wohnen darin.
> Atme, daß
> sie sich löse. (*GW,* 1:148)
>
> [*Jacob's voice:*
>
> The tears.
> The tears in the brother's eye.
> One stayed put, grew.
> We live in it.
> Breathe, so that
> it may be released.]

The release of the tear in which the "we" of the poem is enclosed serves simultaneously as the redemption of this "we." *Lösen* (to release) is related to *erlösen* (to redeem) both etymologically and semantically.

In lieu of redemption "Haut Mal" concludes with a sanctification. The one cloaked in goat's skin consecrates the member of the other, who is associated with Esau. To the extent that the speaker and the addressee are scarcely distinguishable at this point, the sanctified member could belong to both. At the same time, the organ shared bears the mark of circumcision, which divides the old Jew from the new Jew and the old law from the new law. In "Haut Mal" Paul of Tarsus is made to sanctify, or bless, the circumcised member of the speaker, Paul Celan. What in this regard is sanctified is both *le mal* (the evil)

and *das Mal* (the mark), which Paul rejects as a necessary instantiation of the law. In the poem Paul gives his blessing to something he regards as superfluous at best and in more extreme moments as evil itself. For what is blessed here is not only the circumcision in the flesh but the flesh itself, even if it is sooty, black, and bilious.[22] The eros of the poem is directed at the rejected body, the excommunicated "member," which according to Paul's theology has no place in the body of Christ. For this reason, embedded in the word *Glied* is the word for song, *Lied,* which in German can refer to poetry as well. In the letter as opposed to the spirit, in the circumcision of the penis as opposed to the heart, the poem finds its divine malady. Poetry is at once the affliction of the flesh that cannot be redeemed and the sanctification of it, the one form of holiness it can attain. The body is made holy in poetry or song, which is itself written with ink, which is sooty and black; indeed, it is legible only because of its color.

Ashrei *or* a Schrei

According to "Haut Mal," poetry is rooted in the flesh rather than in the spirit. This, one could say, is Celan's response to the denigration of the flesh in Paul's thought. What nonetheless enables the body to become the subject of song is that it is already included in a system of signs, as the poem's bilingual title suggests. The skin, or "Haut," bears an inscription, or "Mal." It is, as it were, already a text awaiting a reader to lift and uplift it with his or her voice. This accounts in part for the tentative lyricism of the poem's closing lines. The disfigured body is transformed into something weightless, as it is taken up in song. Song defies the gravity of the body's situation, if only for the duration of a breath. Increasingly in the late work, however, not even song is able to triumph over the body in its disintegration and decline. Song is denied this triumph because it is itself corporeal. It is part of a corpus of writing that is tainted as well as tainting, to borrow from Paul's idiom. At least this is the implication of the acerbic, if not maudlin, poem "Wenn ich nicht weiß, nicht weiß" (When I don't know, don't know), which converts the first word of the daily Jewish prayer, *Ashrei* (happy, hail), into *a shrei,* the Yiddish word for a scream or cry:

> Wenn ich nicht weiss, nicht weiss,
> ohne dich, ohne dich, ohne Du,
>
> kommen sie alle,
> die

Freigeköpften, die
zeitlebens hirnlos den Stamm
der Du-losen
besangen:

Aschrej,

ein Wort ohne Sinn,
transtibetanisch,
der Jüdin
Pallas
Athene
in die behelmten
Ovarien gespritzt,

und wenn er,

er,

foetal,

karpatisches Nichtnicht beharft,

dann spitzenklöppelt die
Allemande
das sich übergebende un-
sterbliche
Lied. (*GW,* 2:154–55)

[When I don't know, don't know,
without you, without you, without a You,

they all come,
acephalic by choice,
the brainless life-laureates, who
once lauded the tribe
of the Youless:

Ashrei,

a word with no meaning,
transtibetan,
ejaculated into
the helmeted ovaries
of the Jewess
Pallas
Athena,

and when he,

he,

foetal,

strums a Carpathian not-not,

then the
Allemande
starts tatting
her im-
mortal self-sick
song.][23]

Because of the presence of a Hebrew word in this poem, it has been interpreted as a declaration of Celan's faith. John Felstiner argues that Celan attacks the historical experience of the Jews but not the religion as symbolized in this one word.[24] Chief among these experiences are the sterilizations and medical experiments performed on inmates in the camps, experiments alluded to in the fourth stanza of the poem, which turns suddenly to the injection of a word into the ovaries of a Jewess. This turn draws attention to the word *ashrei* in its most menacing aspect, which is its conventional translation into German as *Heil,* a word now more often associated with a shriek than with a jubilant affirmation. In English the first two lines of the prayer read, "Happy are those who dwell in your house; they forever praise you. Selah. Happy the people who have it so. Happy whose God is the Lord." Even in a postwar German prayer book the first two lines are translated as follows: "*Heil* denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen, immerwährend preisen sie dich, Selah! *Heil* dem Volke, dem also geschieht, *heil* dem Volke, dessen Gott der Ewige [ist]!"[25]

According to the poem, *ashrei* is sung by those who in their own lifetime willingly surrendered their heads. This group could be conceived as the German Jewish community, who failed to perceive the dangers of National Socialism in advance and then, when they did, did little to actively resist it. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the question was asked why the Jews went quietly to their death in the camps, in contrast to, say, the residents of the Warsaw ghetto, who at least launched an uprising, even if it was unsuccessful in the end. Yet insofar as the voices that the speaker hears invade his head, they belong to his persecutors. The fourth stanza indicates as much in its allusion to the abuse female prisoners underwent in the camps. "Ashrei" is in this regard a twofold cry: the cry of a murderous mob, which hailed nothing but itself, and the desperate cry of a victim, who appealed to God in vain for help.

The prayer *Ashrei* is a song of praise addressed directly to God. The first two lines are followed by a recitation of Psalm 145, which opens with the line "I will extol Thee, my God and king," and continues in this vein throughout. Its inclusion in a poem where the speaker claims to have no "you" is thus doubly perverse. Without a "you" the prayer *Ashrei* rings hollow. It is a "word without meaning," as the poem puts it, since it has nothing to hail or celebrate, neither a God nor a community organized around him.

Poetry too is aborted without a "you," without someone or something to hail. The poem points in this direction in its references to a failed virgin birth. In the figure of "the Jewess / Pallas / Athena" the poem combines three virgin figures: Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who bursts from her father's head; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and an anonymous Jewess who is presumably subjected to experiments. The convergence of these three virgin figures is as much a comment on the assimilation of German Jews following their emancipation in the nineteenth century as it is on National Socialist genealogies, which located Germany's cultural origin in the Greece of Athena rather than the Near East of Mary.[26] Above all, however, the insemination of a Jewess with a senseless word is a bitter parody of the birth of the Word of God as a model for poetic inspiration. This birth never comes to fruition; the fetus mentioned in the poem is still-born. In lieu of the Word comes a sinister song woven by a cryptic figure called the Allemande. This song is not merely "self-sick," as included in the translation cited above. Looked at in terms of its root elements, *sich übergeben* does not simply mean to throw up; it also means to extend oneself beyond oneself, to exceed one's bounds. The song that the Allemande weaves blankets the horrors recorded in the poem. This is Celan's comment on the immediate postwar years in Germany, in which all reminders of the Holocaust were systematically obliterated. The poem resists the utter eradication of the past by retaining a foreign word that cannot be incorporated into the fabric or weave of the text. The word *ashrei* persists as a *shrei* signifying nothing but the persistence of nothing as a wound *in* language, as a trauma embedded in the German tongue.

The End of Metaphor

The fate of the Psalms in "Wenn ich nicht weiß, nicht weiß" is an index of the distance Celan's work travels from the middle to the late period. What remains of the lyric tradition in this text is only a tormented cry that has no meaning except the absence of the meaning that had previously motivated the lyric. This

is true even for Celan's early work, which rejected the idea of a universal or transcendental meaning (such as humanity), but only to establish the meaningfulness of existence in its fragility and finitude. Indeed, it was the faith in this meaning that enabled the poems to construct metaphors in which existence comes to stand for itself, as demonstrated in the 1961 poem "Psalm."[27] "Psalm" is known as one of Celan's finest lyrics because of the elegance of its form and the refinement of its phrasing, which is as simple as it is exacting:

Psalm

Niemand knetet uns wieder aus Erde und Lehm,
niemand bespricht unsern Staub.
Niemand.

Gelobt seist du, Niemand.
Dir zulieb wollen
wir blühen.
Dir
entgegen.

Ein Nichts
waren wir, sind wir, werden
wir bleiben, blühend:
die Nichts-, die
Niemandsrose.

Mit dem Griffel seelenhell,
dem Staubfaden himmelswüst,
der Krone rot
vom Purpurwort, das wir sangen
über, o über
dem Dorn. (*GW,* 1:225)

[No one kneads us again out of earth and clay,
no one sanctifies our dust.
No one.

Blessed art thou, No one.
For your sake
we bloom.
In your direction,
you.

A nothing
we were, are, will
remain, blooming:

the Nothing-, the
No one's Rose.

With the stylus, soul-bright,
the stamen, heaven-bleak,
the crown red
from the purple word we sang
over, o over
the thorn.]

As many critics have pointed out, the indefinite pronoun *no one* becomes a proper name in the second stanza, thereby transforming the poem's initial lament that "no one will knead us again out of earth and clay" into a song of praise about the power of the words and deeds of No one. The allusions to Genesis in this stanza are among the most conspicuous in Celan's work. Here, as in Genesis, humans are formed out of "dust from the ground." And in both cases speech completes the act of creation: "no one sanctifies our dust." Regarding the transformation of *no one* into *someone,* Marlies Janz writes, "The subject's experience of itself as 'nothing' compels it in turn to recognize no God but 'No one' as the God who disappeared and left his creatures to themselves." She continues, "The understanding of God as No one is the result of experience in the here and now, and to bloom towards him—in the direction of and for the sake of him—means nothing other than to relate to a nonexistent God."[28] No one is the God of a people who are nothing, who have never had and never will have a transcendental ground that determines the nature of their being.

Georg-Michael Schulz, like Janz, explores the place vacated by God in the poem.[29] He argues that in the absence of a transcendent God, humans must take responsibility for themselves. In so doing they demonstrate their independence or sovereignty; they are subject to no one but themselves. This interpretation has roots in "Der Meridian," Celan's one lengthy prose statement about poetry. There he aligns poetry with the statement "Long live the King," in Büchner's play *Danton's Death,* uttered by Lucile as she is taken to the guillotine. Celan emphasizes that the statement is not a pledge to the *ancien régime* (*GW,* 3:189). Rather it is a word honoring "the *majesty* of the absurd, which attests to the presence of something human" (*GW,* 3:190, emphasis added). This interpretation is based in part on Heidegger's analysis of being-unto-death, discussed in the first chapter. For Heidegger, Dasein must assume authority for its existence after the fact, after it has been thrown from nowhere into what is not yet a world. This task falls to Dasein, since it has no an-

tecedent or root cause. Dasein can never retreat behind its existence; it can only proceed from it through the act of projection. In this manner Dasein becomes a basis for itself, albeit a self that is nothing in the sense that nothing authorizes or grounds it. The description of the "we" of the poem in terms usually reserved for God—the lines "A nothing / we were, are, will / remain" have been linked to the description of God in Revelations: "I am the Alpha and Omega . . . which is, and which was, and which is to come" (1:8)[30]—establishes the majesty of man, albeit as a nothing, or in Heidegger's terms, a "being determined by a not." Likewise the rose suggests a certain authority, if not divinity, of man insofar as it is a symbol of the *Shekhinah* in the Kabbalah and of Christ in Christian iconography. What interests me, however, is not the symbols of power the poem's abandoned subject appropriates for itself but rather how a subject that is by its own admission "nothing" can represent itself in metaphors at all.

This process is precisely one of self-engenderment, as the final stanza indicates through recourse to botany. The "we" of the poem blooms

> Mit dem Griffel seelenhell,
> dem Staubfaden himmelswüst,
> der Krone rot
> vom Purpurwort, das wir sangen
> über, o über
> dem Dorn.
>
> [With the stylus, soul-bright,
> the stamen, heaven-bleak,
> the crown red
> from the purple word we sang
> over, o over
> the thorn.]

The stanza highlights the organs necessary for a plant to reproduce itself: the masculine stylus, which releases the seed, and the feminine stigma in which it is planted. The crown of a plant contains both these parts, as well as all the leaves that constitute the blossom of a flower. The stanza borrows conspicuously from representations of Christ's Passion. The crown of thorns, the purple coat, the red of Christ's blood and his wound, which is often depicted as a flower, all serve as a subtext for these verses. Yet whereas Christ becomes a rose in surmounting or surviving his own death, the "we" of the poem is denied this possibility of transcendence. The "stamen" of the "No one's rose" is said to be "himmelswüst," heaven-bleak, which Schulz claims is reminiscent of

Luther's translation of the second verse from Genesis, "die Erde war wüst und leer."[31] The rose blooms even though the heavens have been laid to waste. It lives in projecting itself "over, o over / the thorn," which is the one conspicuous instance of pathos in the text. In the absence of a transcendental ground, that is, a God who kneads us "out of earth and clay," the stem representing the poem's collective subject is forced to serve as its own crown, which in botany is the blossom we recognize as the flower. It props itself above the void at its base, which is represented orthographically in the sign "o" in the penultimate verse. The "we" of the poem props itself up and over itself "with the stylus," which is also a writing instrument, indeed the instrument that writes the words of this "psalm" in praise of man's self-engenderment. The sheer nothingness of a life that is not guaranteed by any God allows for life itself to reign supreme at the conclusion of the poem. Whether the No one's Rose signifies the continuing existence of Israel after the Holocaust is not a question I will address here. Suffice it to say that it is the fact of existence that enables the poem to construct a metaphor for existence in turn. This fact becomes a symbol for itself. "Für-niemand-und-nichts-Stehn" (*GW,* 2:23) (Standing for no one and nothing) is how Celan summarized this dynamic in another text.

God's absence in Celan's early work allows for the construction of a metaphor that attests to the majesty of human existence. In the late work, however, this paradox no longer obtains since absence is no longer absolute, as the expression "a three-quarter death" in "Aus Engelsmaterie" demonstrates. If absence is only partial, then presence is as well. Indeed the two terms cease to be meaningful when they no longer function as diametrical opposites. As a result Celan's late work displays a decided materialist bent, not only in its focus on the body but also in its language, which can no longer be metaphorical. The poems cannot invoke the symbols associated with the Godhead to celebrate man's place, since God is neither absent nor present, an ambiguous state that applies to humans as well. The effects of this predicament are registered in the short poem "Bei den zusammengetretenen" (By the trampled) in the 1967 collection *Atemwende:*

> Bei den zusammengetretenen
> Zeichen, im
> worthäutigen Ölzelt, am Ausgang
> der Zeit,
> hellgestöhnt
> ohne Laut
> —du, Königsluft, ans

Pestkreuz genagelte, jetzt
blühst du—,
porenäugig,
schmerzgeschuppt, zu
Pferde. (*GW,* 2:69)

[By the trampled
signs, in the
word-skinned oil tent, at the parting gates
of time,
moaned bright
without a sound
—you, royal air, nailed
to the plague cross, now
you bloom—
pore-eyed,
covered in the fish scales of pain,
on a horse.]

Celan wrote this poem on 24 November 1964, a day after his forty-first birthday and shortly after two consecutive reading tours in Germany that took him to Hamburg, Düsseldorf, and Cologne.[32] In an early draft of the poem, Celan identified the cross more specifically as the Cologne plague cross, which he saw with Heinrich Böll in 1954. Although built in 1304, before the outbreak of the plague, the cross was eventually renamed after the epidemic hit the city in 1349. As in other cities, the Jews were blamed for the onset of the plague. Following a bloody pogrom, all remaining Jews were expelled from Cologne in 1349; they were admitted back in 1372 only to be expelled again in 1424 for several centuries.[33] Of note is that in the Jewish martyrology books of Cologne several names date from 1349, presumably referring to martyrs killed in the pogrom.[34] As the editors of Celan's letters to his wife note, Celan associated the Jewish victims of the Black Death with the Jewish victims of the Brown Plague; the "croix 'dite de la peste,'" as he puts it in one letter, is emblematic of Jewish suffering and sacrifice in the Middle Ages and the modern period.[35] The fact that the plague cross in question here is in Cologne would have had particular significance for Celan. On 24 December 1959 the Cologne synagogue was defaced in the first significant anti-Semitic incident in Germany following the war. Several other incidents followed in its wake in Europe.[36]

The plague in question in the poem nonetheless remains vague. The emphasis falls instead on who or what is nailed to the cross and on the location of this devotional object. The poem itself abounds with allusions to Chris-

tianity. In the phrase "word-skinned oil tent" it names *in nuce* everything that is supposed to distinguish Jesus as the Messiah. His status as the "Word made flesh" is captured in the invented adjective "word-skinned"; likewise the description of his body as an "oil tent" reminds one that the term *messiah* originally meant the one anointed with oil. Above all, however, it is the reference to "Königsluft" (royal air) that participates in a Christological scheme. The term would seem to play on the term *pneuma,* for the Holy Spirit, which Christ attests to in his resurrection. In a significant theological reversal, it is not Christ's material body but his spirit that is nailed to the cross. Air and therewith breath is affixed to this structure, signaling the vulnerability of the spirit.

The vulnerability of the spirit is implied in another manner as well. The text could be said to consist exclusively of auxiliaries, or *Beiwörter*—the traditional German designation for adjectives and adverbs—since its only possible subject ("you, royal air") and verb ("blooms") are separated from the remainder of the text by dashes. Of note in this regard is that the text begins with the word *bei* and ends with the word *Pferd,* which itself derives from the Latin *para-veredus* (a postal horse on byways).[37]

In a famous sermon, "Quasi stella mutatina," Meister Eckhart claims that we should aim to be a "bîwort" (adjective, adverb) to the word of God, which in this case is not the son but the father.[38] God in his definition is neither good nor just; rather these are aspects of his manifestation, as the Sefiroth are aspects of *En-Sof.* For this reason, Meister Eckhart rejects the claim that man's will is divine. We can only will what is determinate, what is defined as this or that, which amounts to saying what is limited in its operations to a discrete mode of being. For example, that which is good is limited to goodness in its operations; if it were to cease to be good, it would cease to be at all, which in the case of God is a contradiction in terms. Reason is divine, since it can apprehend not only what is but also what is not, which includes not only things past and future but also what can never be as this or that. Meister Eckhart can thus conclude, "The soul that loves God takes him under the veil of goodness. But reason removes the veil of goodness and takes God as he is, stripped of goodness and being and all names."[39]

In himself God is reason, which is why humans can achieve oneness with him through the exercise of reason. For Eckhart, what characterizes reason is not that it recognizes something apart from itself but rather that it recognizes itself in its own indeterminateness, that is, as the Being that grounds all things. Later in the sermon Eckhart identifies reason with a word "that is neither spoken nor thought, that is never expressed. Rather it remains eternally in the one who

speaks."[40] This word stands in marked contrast to two other types of words: the word that is uttered and that each of us incarnates as a created being and the word that symbolizes what is not there but could be there at some other time or in other circumstances. It is this silent word, a word that is perhaps "moaned bright, / without a sound," that is reason's own recognition of itself, which amounts to saying a recognition of the divine. Meister Eckhart urges his listeners to be a "bîwort" to this silent word, which is the activity of God not only in himself but in our reason and soul to the extent that they are one with him.[41]

Embedded in the body of Celan's text are the subject and verb that every other word modifies as an auxiliary, a "bîwort" in Eckhart's vocabulary. The Word of God in John—"In the beginning was the word and the word was with God"—is referred to as the *verbum* in the Vulgate, which perhaps explain why the poem's only subject and verb are set off from the remainder of the text. In the poem, the subject and verb have yet to become "trampled signs." And yet what the poem points to is the possibility that there could be no Word that embodies God's everlasting spirit, call it *ruach* or *pneuma.* If the air of the king suddenly blooms, as the poem would have it, it is as an apocalyptic force, as the final lines of the poem suggest in their invocation of Revelations. The horse on which the royal air sits, as if preparing to depart, is reminiscent of the four horses in Revelations, which appear as the first four seals are broken. Each of these horses bears a horseman who brings ruin to the world. The first horse is white and bears Christ with a bow and arrow; the second is red and bears War as an allegorical figure; the third is black, and its rider represents the famine to visit the world. Finally, the fourth horse, the pale one, bears Death, who is given license to kill by sword, famine, pestilence, and beast (6:1–9). Death in the poem becomes the pore-eyed figure of Christ. Or rather the everlasting spirit in the poem is reduced to the mortal flesh of Christ. Hence the rider of the horse is "covered with the fish scales of pain." The scales of pain recall Christ's symbol as a fish, which derives from the Greek word for fish, *ichthus,* an acrostic for *i*esous *ch*ristos *th*eou *u*iou *s*oter (Jesus Christ, God's Savior). If the cross traditionally symbolizes the transcendence of the spirit over the flesh, in the poem the symbolism is reversed. Spirit is reduced to a fleshy figure. It dies only to persist as death, which in Revelations is a figure as pale green as the horse it rides; both look like corpses. In the absence of spirit, there can be only auxiliaries, or *Beiwörter,* words thrown together without a principal subject or verb. The poem positions itself in a "now" before "der Ausgang / der Zeit" (the parting gates / of time), when there will be no actor nor agent, only collapsed signs. Indeed in the phrase "Ausgang

/ der Zeit" the poem signals its own apocalyptic vision. The first word begins with the letter *a,* and the last word begins with *z,* recalling Christ's proclamation based on the Greek alphabet, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come" (Rev. 1:8). In this statement Christ declares himself to be the sum of all things, whether the things exist in the present or the past or are envisioned in the future. Past, present, and future are all united in the poem, albeit not in the body of Christ as an everlasting force but in a spirit that has died and in so doing has become an indelible and ineradicable body.

In "Psalm" it was precisely the negativity of the human—"A nothing / we were, are, will / remain"—that permitted the construction of a metaphor. Metaphysical nothingness allowed the elevation of physical being to something that could stand for itself. "Bei den zusammengetretenen" has more devastating implications for poetic speech. An absent God is replaced by a suffering God; spirit is replaced by the body. The signs that remain are trampled together, which prevents them from even standing for themselves. The only possible victor in the poem is the apocalyptic horse, which presumably tramples the signs that compose the poem.

If the poem does refer back to "Psalm," it is in the form of botany. Psalm's crowning achievement was the construction of "the Nothing-, the / No one's Rose," which symbolized the majesty of existence, which is not rooted in anything but itself. Here if there is a flower, it is the poisonous Christmas rose (in German, *Christrose*), named such since it blooms in the winter, when everything else has died. The flower's scientific name is *Helleborus niger* (black hellebore), which resonates with the Black Death infecting the spirit in Celan's text. The blossom of the poem is the Black Death. "By the trampled" is perched at the moment of its eclipse, when the subject and verb set off with dashes are about to be reduced to mere *Beiwörter.*

Bodyscapes

In Celan's late poems words become mere auxiliaries, or *Beiwörter,* without a subject. Taking the place of the subject are representations of the body in its most material aspect. James K. Lyon, in one of the few essays devoted to the medical terminology in Celan's texts, claims that physiological landscapes replace the psychic landscapes of the earlier poems.[42] Celan would in all likelihood have been familiar with this terminology from his brief stint as a medical student in France. In 1938 and 1939 he studied medicine at the university

in Tours; owing to the outbreak of World War II he was not able to return to France after 1939. The late poems abound with what could be called "bodyscapes," maps of the interior of the body as a foreign terrain. If the poems focus on the interior of the body, especially the head, it is because the nervous system is the one given in these poems, which take skepticism to a new extreme. The perceptual apparatus takes precedence over what is perceived. Hence in one poem dreams are reduced to their material substrate, specifically the nerve cells, which give the brain its gray color: "Flutender, groß- / zelliger Schlafbau. // Jede Zwischenwand von / Graugeschwadern befahren" (*GW,* 2:37) (Overflowing, large- / celled sleep house. // Every intervening wall is covered with / gray swarms). In another the skull is called "[die] große, glühende Wölbung" (*GW,* 2:97) (the large, glowing vault) in a conspicuous play on the more conventional expression *vault of the heavens.* The interior of the body comes to look more like an exterior space as the existence of an exterior world grows more uncertain. This uncertainty also has an effect on words, which take on a life of their own in the absence of a meaning to govern them. In one poem the search for a simultaneous word (*Wort*) and place (*Ort*) leads to the almost senseless word chain "Vermessen, entmessen, verortet, entwortet, // entwo" (*GW,* 2:123) (Measured, unmeasured, placed, defaced // de facto).[43] This chain verges on nonsense because it obeys only the logic of its own sound patterns, like those in the final two lines of the poem, which play on the acoustic similarity between the phrase "im Arm" and the word "immer": "Aschen- / Schluckauf, deine Augen / im Arm, immer" (*GW,* 2:123) (Ashen / hiccup, your eyes, in the arm, always). Word terrains and body terrains collide as one in a universe that no longer has a logos, only the logic of sound patterns.

The poem "Schädeldenken" (Skull Thinking), for instance, places its thought on a "Pfeilspur" (arrow trace), which is reminiscent of the *Pfeilnaht,* the sagittal suture, running from the front to the back of the skull:

> Schädeldenken, stumm, auf der Pfeilspur.
>
> Dein hohes
> Lied, in den harten
> Februarfunken verbißner,
> halbzertrümmerter
> Kiefer.
>
> Die eine, noch
> zu befahrende Meile
> Melancholie.

Von Erreichtem umbuscht jetzt, zielblau,
aufrecht im Kahn,
auch aus dem knirschenden Klippen-
segen entlassen (*GW,* 2:84)

[Skull Thinking, mute, on the heels of an arrow.

Your lofty
song, lodged in the hard
February sparks of clenched,
half-destroyed
jaws.

The one
mile of melancholy
not yet crossed.

Now in the thicket of things attained,
crystal clear, upright in the boat,
released too from the gnashing
cliff-blessing.]

The poem was drafted in February 1965, a fact registered in the figure of "Februarfunken" (February sparks) residing in "clenched, half-destroyed jaws."[44] This was also a period in which Celan was preoccupied again with Claire Goll's accusation that he had plagiarized the line "Schwarze Milch der Frühe" (Black milk of the morning) from her late husband, Yvan Goll, in his poem "Todesfuge," first published in 1948.[45] The phrase "Dein hohes / Lied" refers in part to the Goll affair, since the name of the figure who stands for all the victims of the Holocaust in "Todesfuge" is Sulamith, which comes from the Song of Solomon, "das Hohelied" in German. Yet the poem marks another date as well: 23 November, Celan's birthday, which falls under the zodiacal sign Sagittarius, the archer. The word for arrow in Latin is *sagitta.* The thought of the poem proceeds "on the heels of an arrow," which is a figure for the sagittal suture, which forms only after birth.[46] The trace of an arrow thus functions as a double mark of destiny. First, it underscores the sign of the zodiac under which Celan was born. Second, it points to the moment of birth, when the bones of the skull have yet to be conjoined. "Schädeldenken" proceeds down the trace of an archaic past in search of what the future holds for the one born under the sign of the arrow in both its anatomical and astrological senses.

This curious sign comes to dominate the landscape, which is at once the landscape of a body and of a coastal forest. *Kiefer* is the German word not only

for jaws but also for pine trees, which are sometimes found in coastal regions. Both meanings, I would argue, are at play in "Schädeldenken," which never articulates the thought propelling it, as if it were caught between clenched teeth. This thought remains "mute." Only the objects surrounding it are mentioned, as is often the case in medieval and Renaissance depictions of melancholy. The poem invokes this tradition explicitly in the third stanza. The phrase "Die eine noch zu befahrende Meile / Melancholie" (the one mile of melancholy / not yet crossed) returns the poem to the trace of the arrow or sutures on the skull, which is the typical object of contemplation for the melancholic subject. The poem continues in this vein in announcing its departure from song. It is released from a blessing that is not so much spoken as it is spit out:

> Von Erreichtem umbuscht jetzt, zielblau,
> aufrecht im Kahn,
> auch aus dem knirschenden Klippen-
> segen entlassen.
>
> [Now in the thicket of things attained,
> crystal clear, upright in the boat,
> released too from the gnashing
> cliff blessing.]

According to this stanza, the thought of the poem is "in the thicket of things attained" and "zielblau" (literally, as blue as the aim), which is at once the color of the heavens and of the ocean. If the poem reaches its aim, it is precisely because it has none—at least none in particular, as the poem suggests in describing itself as "zielblau." In German a journey into the unknown is referred to as *eine Fahrt ins Blaue;* the phrase *ins Blaue hineinzufahren* likewise means to wander off into the distance. Whether the poem journeys into the heavens or the sea matters little, since both are unknown. They are indeterminate expanses whose blueness, Heidegger would argue, is the color of their infinite depth and extension.[47]

Above all, the journey of the poem is one from song. The poem's "hohes Lied," its supposed song of praise, is "aus dem knirschenden Klippen- / segen entlassen" (released from the gnashing / cliff blessing). The alliteration on the consonant [k] is a conspicuous feature of the final stanza. "Kahn" (boat), is followed by "knirschen" (gnash) and "Klippen" (cliff); the only other similar sound of note in the poem is "Kiefer" (jaws), in the second stanza. The consonant [k] is known in linguistics as a "velar" consonant, in German a *Kehlkopflaute,* since it is produced at the back of the mouth, where the tongue

reaches to the upper palate.[48] The sound [k] stands in stark contrast to the labial sound [m], which dominates in the first and third stanzas in the words "stumm" (mute), "Meile" (mile), und "Melancholie" (melancholy). The sound [m] is produced by pursing the lips, whereas [k] can only be pronounced with parted lips. To be released from "dem knirschenden Klippen-/segen" hence is to be released from the lips, which are embedded in the word "K*lippen*" and made it possible to speak of something like a "mile of melancholy." Throughout the poem the mouth had been closed either because the lips were pursed or because the jaws were clenched in bitterness. This nonetheless did not prevent the poem from speaking. Indeed, [m] is known as a "voiced," or *stimmhaft,* consonant in phonetics since its production requires the vocal chords to oscillate. The word "stumm" (mute) is in this regard still too vocal, or voiced, for "Schädeldenken." The grinding and creaking of bones comes out only in [k], which is classified as an "unvoiced," or *stimmlose,* consonant in phonetics since the vocal chords do not oscillate when it is pronounced. "Knirschend" (grinding or gnashing) is the sound of bones, the sound of "skull thinking." This word would seem to endure longer than any other in the poem, in part because it combines almost all the possible consonantal sounds (velar, dental, nasal, uvular, palatal) but the labial variety. Yet the poem seeks even to be released from this sound in the fully voiceless consonant known as the "glottal stop," or *Kehlkopfverschußlaut.* This linguistic term does appear in one late poem, "Frankfurt, September," prompted by the Frankfurt Book Fair and dedicated to the memory of Sigmund Freud and Franz Kafka, the latter of whom in his final weeks was reduced to silence due to laryngeal tuberculosis.[49] The poem concludes with the statement, "Der Kehlkopfverschlußlaut/singt" (*GW,* 2:114) (The glottal stop/sings), which is a paradoxical claim since the sound in question is that of the closing of the larynx, the sound-producing organ. Moreover, the glottal stop has disappeared from all modern Indo-European languages. "Schädeldenken" arrives at this lost sound in losing itself in the blueness of the sky or the ocean. Released from all blessing, that is, from grinding jaws and pursed lips, it completes its *Fahrt ins Blaue,* its journey into empty infinity.

Hoisting a Mast

In the collection *Fadensonnen* the body is increasingly seen as a terrain, thanks to the vocabulary of anatomy and neurology, which includes such terms as *sylvische Spalte* (Sylvian fissure), *Spinnwebenhaut* (arachnoid tissue), *Brücke*

(pons), and *Insel* (insula), among others. The more the body comes to resemble a landscape, the more insurmountable it becomes, since whatever would appear to be outside is but an extension of the inside. In other words, once the inside of the body, especially the head, is projected as a terrain, the more impossible it becomes to escape the self, if the term *self* still applies to the late work. For the self implies a unity, whereas the body in Celan's late poetry is neither a whole nor a collection of parts but a field with an infinite number of possible formations. Take, for example, the poem "Komm" (Come), which explores the brain as if it were a pond whose bottom cannot be seen:

> Komm, wir löffeln
> Nervenzellen
> —die Entengrütze, multipolar,
> der leergeleuchteten Teiche—
> aus den
> Rauten-
> gruben.
>
> Zehn Fasern ziehn
> aus den noch erreichbaren Zentren
> Halberkennbares nach. (*GW,* 2:181)
>
> [Come, we're spooning out
> nerve cells
> —the multipolar duck porridge
> of the spotlit pond—
> from the
> rhomboid
> fossa.
>
> Ten fibers draw
> from the still reachable centers
> something half-recognizable.]

The "Rautengrube," or rhomboid fossa, is located in the fourth ventricle of the brain, immediately above the medulla oblongata, which is an extension of the spinal chord. According to Adolf Faller's anatomy textbook, which Celan is known to have read in the mid-1960s, the rhomboid fossa contains the centers for several "vegetative" functions, such as breathing, circulation, and metabolism.[50] The poem points to the role of this organ in maintaining the minimum requirements for life in naming the nerve cells in it "Entengrütze" (duckweed), which is itself a kind of vegetable.[51] *Duckweed* is the generic name for a variety of aquatic plants that ducks eat as their principal source of

nourishment. The reference to this vegetable would perhaps not stand out if the reader of the poem were not called on to ladle ("löffeln") nerve cells. Insofar as the reader is called on to do so, however, he or she is put in the position of a *Löffler,* or spoonbill, any of a category of wading birds with spoon-shaped bills, including the *Löffelente,* or shoveling duck. The reader is in essence called on to become an animal, or rather to join a group of individuals, possibly doctors in a clinic, foraging the brain, an activity that reduces the brain to a mere vegetable and those who investigate it to animals in search of food.

Those who spoon out the brain are reduced to animals precisely because they do not recognize that what they operate on is not a thing but what could be called the soul of a person, that is, the central nervous system. In "Der Meridian" Celan notes the dangers of a *technē*-driven art and, by extension, a *technē*-driven world, in which singular, unrepeatable dates (*Daten*) become mere data (*Daten*) included on "[der] stotternden / Informationsmast" (*GW,* 2:120) (the stuttering / information mast). Art, he writes, has the "gift of ubiquity," which is an attribute usually reserved for God. In this case, however, art's ubiquity is also its weakness, specifically its inability to die, to be human. It exists exclusively as a semblance of life, as the examples Celan cites from Büchner's work demonstrate. Art is the realm "in dem die Affengestalt, die Automaten und damit . . . ach, auch die Kunst zuhause zu sein scheinen" (*GW,* 3:192) (in which the monkey figures, the mechanical devices, and . . . o, yes, art too seem to be at home). Art in short "apes" (nachäffen), or mimics, life; hence Celan's emphasis on "die Affengestalt" (monkey figures) as the quintessential example of art. The danger of such mimicry is that it alienates man from himself. It leads him to forget himself in favor of the guises that art furnishes: "Wer Kunst vor Augen und im Sinn hat, . . . der ist selbstvergessen. Kunst schafft Ich-Ferne" (*GW,* 3:193) (Those who have art before their eyes and in their heads . . . are lost to themselves. Art generates self-estrangement).[52]

Poetry for Celan represents a form of resistance to such self-estrangement since it is the expression of an individual who speaks "unter dem Neigungswinkel seines Daseins, dem Neigungswinkel seiner Kreatürlichkeit" (*GW,* 3:197) (under the angle of inclination of his being, under the angle of inclination of his creatureliness). The "angle of inclination" Celan speaks of here, which comes from crystallography, is the unique bent of an individual, who projects a future based on a set of irreversible circumstances from the past, circumstances that can best be described as fateful, such as the position of stars at one's birth, or in Celan's case the missed farewell to his parents, who in June 1942 were deported to a camp in Transnistria, where they died. Because this

bent is unique, it can scarcely be registered in words. Words must by definition be repeatable if they are to have meaning in different contexts. The expression of this bent is for Celan the "event" of poetry. Poetry is by necessity obscure, although this does not mean that it is either hermetic or opaque, since it can only honor what is unique or what has no likeness if it suspends art in its mimetic operations: "vielleicht versagen gerade hier die Automaten—für diesen einmaligen kurzen Augenblick?" (*GW,* 3:196) (perhaps this is where all the mechanical devices break down—for just a single, short moment). In other words, poetry can only surmount art through what Celan calls "a distance perhaps projected from the self" (*GW,* 3:195) to stall the very self-estrangement that art brings about. Celan's oft-cited comment "Die Kunst erweitern? Nein. Sondern geh mit der Kunst in deine allereigenste Enge. Und setze dich frei" (*GW,* 3:200) (Expand art? No. Go with art into your very own corner. And set yourself free) bears directly on this operation. Distance can only be projected from a position of constraint, in which the choke hold of art is met by a turning of the breath, *eine Atemwende.* Poetry interrupts the mechanisms of art not only for the sake of the self but also for the sake of an encounter with another who has left an indelible mark on the self, indeed, who has shaped the "angle of inclination of one's being, the angle of inclination of one's creatureliness."

For this reason so much of Celan's poetry is dialogical, even if the other should not be equated automatically with a historical addressee. The poems seek dialogue with another as much as they seek to be mortal themselves. This is not true of Celan's late work. The poems no longer have faith in the possibility of poetry to disrupt "[die] menetekelnden / Affen" (*GW,* 2:134) (the monkeys / spouting mene tekel), as Celan puts it in a poem that recalls the monkey figures in "Der Meridian." Even the poem "Komm," which addresses its reader, does so only to invite him or her to join in shoveling the brain like a shovel duck. In the final stanza, I would argue, "Komm" calls into question whether it is in fact a poem, understood as an utterance, that attests to the singularity of an individual:

> Zehn Fasern ziehn
> aus den noch erreichbaren Zentren
> Halberkennbares nach
>
> [Ten fibers draw
> from the still reachable centers
> something half-recognizable.]

The "ten fibers"' that reach into the rhomboid fossa are simultaneously the ten words that make up the stanza. They fail to reach the bottom of this organ, which is also a mine and a grave. *Grube* (fossa) derives from the verb *graben* (to dig) and is often used as a synonym for mine (*Bergwerk*), as, for instance, in the name for a miner's lantern, *Grubenlicht.* What these fibers reach they draw up, but it is something only "half-recognizable." "Half-recognizable" is the second longest word of the poem, preceded only by the adjective "spotlit" (leergeleuchtet) which applies to the ponds of the first stanza. The length of these two words, however, is not the only aspect that sets them in a relation. It is rather their opposition as figures of light and darkness, or, alternatively, clarity and murkiness. If the poem invokes the vocabulary of neuroscience, it is because it illuminates the organs of the brain. But it also empties the brain of any individual content, that is, any content that belongs uniquely to a single person. In the "half-recognizable" entity the fibers draw up, the poem locates its own resistance to a light that obliterates anything that is not recognizable, that has no name or purpose. Something "half-recognizable" casts its shadow on what are otherwise "ponds spotlit" to the point where all spots fade out. The German "leergeleuchtet" indicates that the ponds are emptied out by the light illuminating them. This is the only hope the text can muster at its end that it is more than an empty utterance, more than art or artifice.

"Komm" will not be remembered as one of Celan's better poems. I would not argue that it represents the culmination of his verse. But in its desperation, if not bitterness, it reveals the stakes of his poetry, which is to constitute a moment as an embodied form, as something creaturely. In the late work this moment never arrives. Instead the poems hoist dismembered body parts in the hope of a future time when they will either be incorporated into a whole (i.e., re-membered) or vanish altogether:

> ein flackender
> Hirnlappen, ein
> Meerstück,
> hißt, wo du lebst,
> seine Hauptstadt, die
> unbesetzbare. (*GW,* 2:404)
>
> [a flickering
> brain lobe, a
> piece of sea,
> hoists its capital,
> where you live,
> unoccupiable.]

Epilogue

In the third section of the *Origin of German Tragic Drama* Walter Benjamin remarks that the symbol was originally a theological concept, although both the classicists and the romantics succeeded in appropriating it for an aesthetic theory based on the autonomy of the subject.[1] In so doing they robbed the symbol of what Benjamin calls its "masculine contour."[2] They transformed it from a lightning bolt to a gentle shimmer, an elegant metaphor for the beautiful soul. During his lifetime Celan was criticized for the refinement and restraint of his work. The poet Johannes Bobrowski, for instance, described the collection *Sprachgitter* as "an elegantly displayed alchemical kitchen."[3] The dismissive nature of Brobrowski's comment notwithstanding, the East German poet did not stand alone in his assessment. Many critics agreed that Celan's poetry relied on metaphors too beautiful for their content. What is significant about this judgment is the assumption it contains that Celan's work consists of metaphors that can be divided into a vehicle and a tenor, as convention would have it. In this study I have examined the embodied figures in Celan's work in order to explore the notion of metaphor at play in them. In addition, I have considered the differences between the forms of embodiment characteristic of Celan's middle period and those characteristic of his late period. While these differences do not amount to a progression, they indicate a shift in the premises of Celan's poetry that has been largely neglected in the secondary literature.

For Benjamin, the symbol operates not only in a theological but also in a Christological context. It is, as he defines it, the paradoxical unity of a sensible

and a supersensible object. Although this definition does not necessarily apply to metaphor, later variations on it do insofar as they blur the line between the symbol as a devotional object and metaphor as a rhetorical figure. According to Benjamin, the paradoxical union of mutually exclusive or irreconcilable entities became a mere relation of appearance to essence in the eighteenth century. In much the same manner as the supposed vehicle in metaphor expresses an ethereal tenor, so too the symbolic object came to express an immaterial essence. Of note is that this interpretation is no less Christian in orientation than Benjamin's first explanation of the symbol. But it places greater emphasis on a moment of sacrifice, as the critic Friedrich Creuzer suggests in a passage quoted by Benjamin:

> "Here [in the mystical symbol] the ineffable dominates. In seeking expression it bursts and destroys its earthly form, which proves to be too weak a vessel for this infinite and mighty essence." In the plastic symbol, "the essence does not overtake everything. Rather, in deference to nature, it yields to her form, and permeates and enlivens her. The conflict between the infinite and the finite is thereby resolved in that the essence constrains itself and in so doing becomes human."[4]

The opposition that Creuzer sets up between the mystical and the plastic symbol enables him to underscore the process whereby the plastic symbol's tenor becomes the core, or essence, of the human being. The tenor voluntarily renounces its claim to immeasurability.[5] In so doing it assumes human form. Indeed, it demonstrates its humanity by sacrificing its infiniteness. For the essence of the human being in Creuzer's theory is spirit, which is free—free even to sacrifice its own freedom, or put otherwise, to constrain its boundlessness.[6] This interpretation of the symbol deifies man as much as it humanizes God. For this reason, Benjamin remarks sarcastically that the "supreme fullness of being" in Creuzer's thought is finally man.[7]

While Christian in their implication, Creuzer's remarks do not exhaust the possible doctrinal interpretations of Christ's sacrifice. What is significant, nonetheless, is that Creuzer, like others, defines the symbol as the incarnation of a divine idea. In so doing he takes as his model the Word made flesh; he makes Christ the exemplary aesthetic symbol, which all modern artworks follow in turn. For Benjamin this misunderstanding of the symbol—and perhaps of Christianity—has persisted since the eighteenth century. It was undoubtedly a part of the philosophical and aesthetic tradition that Celan inherited. Given the suspicion of this tradition on the part of Celan, as a Jew who had

witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust, one might be tempted to say that he opted for allegorical rather than symbolic representation in his poetry. Such a conclusion, however, would simplify the dynamics of Celan's work, which relies on symbolic figures and metaphors, albeit in an idiosyncratic fashion. One of the few critics who Benjamin claims understood the difference between symbol and allegory is the romantic critic Joseph von Görres, who wrote the following passage, which is not insignificant for Celan's geological, astrological, and anatomical poems:

> We can be satisfied with the explanation that the symbol is a self-enclosed, compact and self-sufficient sign of ideas, whereas the allegory is a successive, continuous, dramatically charged reproduction of the symbol caught up in the stream of time. The two relate to one another in the same manner as *the silent, large and mighty mountains and plant world relate to the lively progression of human history.*[8]

Celan's geological and astrological poems construct symbolic figures, albeit ones that are neither self-enclosed nor self-sufficient, as opposed to the poems on the human body, which mention organs only to discard them as inadequate vehicles for meaning.

In Celan's geological poems the world is seen through a restrospective glance. A disembodied eye looks back at the world as a place it has abandoned. This is a world in which erosion has left its mark, a world that thus bears witness not to the past but to its erasure or passing. If the past does come to the foreground, it is as that which has disappeared and which as a result is visible only in the scars imprinted on the landscape, which are simultaneously the lines of the text.[9] At the same time, the text and the landscape should not be collapsed into one, since the latter is introduced primarily as a conceit of the poem. The poems Celan wrote in the late 1950s look back at themselves from a point in the future that they project. This point represents the farthest reach of the poem, that is, the horizon awaiting it given its beginning or origin. What the geological phenomena in Celan's poetry demonstrate are the distinct contours of the poem, or in Heideggerian terms, the possibilities available to it as a *finite* utterance. Metaphor persists in these works but not as the embodiment of an infinite force. Rather it embodies the finite possibilities of the poem as seen from the future.

Celan's astrological lyrics from the 1963 collection *Die Niemandsrose* could likewise be said to demonstrate their finitude by means of something else, in this case celestial imagery borrowed from Scholem's work on the Kabbalah, in

particular his writings on the primordial man formed out of God's emanations, or Sefiroth. Yet the emphasis in these works falls less on the finite being of the poem than on the ability of a written text to inhabit or constitute a moment. The poems from this period take recourse in Scholem's idea that the divine emanations are simultaneously God's names and the letters of the alphabet. If this is the case, then the poems can likewise claim to be created beings, if not creatures, imbued with life or breath. Yet this assumption also limits the poems to the duration of a breath. They linger only as long as a breath continues to support them or lift them from the page. Celan's astrological lyrics invariably focus on fleeting phenomena—comets, for instance, or wafting clouds. In this manner they underscore their own temporal nature. They expire like the very phenomena that they represent only to be remembered after the fact, that is, after they have been read or vocalized. It would perhaps be more appropriate to say that they expire in becoming comets or clouds themselves, since what distinguishes these phenomena is that they are composed of fire or air, which is also the substance of the soul in the Kabbalah. Celan's poems in this period culminate in the "paradoxical union" of the sensible and the supersensible, specifically the letter and breath. Moreover, this union is achieved in a "mystical now," which is Benjamin's description of the temporality of the symbol.[10] Yet this is a "now" that is condemned to lapse, since the breath that animates the poem eventually subsides, making the poem itself a unique occurrence. If it comes to life again, it is in another form: as the embodiment of another breath or the incarnation of a different spark.

Beginning with the 1967 collection *Atemwende,* Celan's poetry becomes increasingly enigmatic and terse. The shortening of the lines would seem to indicate Celan's impatience with poetry, including his own work. In one late poem skulls are compared to jet engines;[11] and in another Celan refers to poetry as "das hundert-/züngige Mein-/gedicht" (*GW,* 2:31) (the one-hundred-/tongued, counterfeit/poem) in a conspicuous play on the German word *Meineid,* "false oath." Yet the seeming haste with which figures are introduced and discarded has less to do with any impatience on the part of the poem than with a loss of faith in the possibility of words to embody anything, to be figures or shapes instead of mere signs. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Celan's anatomical poems. The body is ripped apart only to be presented as an assortment of nerves, cells, and fibers. The poems name various organs of the nervous system, as if searching for the seat of the soul, only to be disappointed that neither the name nor the organ materializes as an animating force. For the world of Celan's late poetry is a dead world, emptied of all significance. All it

has to cling to is its materiality or its physical character as a thing. Words too assume the character of things in their emptiness, that is, in their inability to incarnate what they name; they can only designate it. Hence the late poems abound with word chains formed on the basis of sound patterns alone or images composed of disparate elements that are related in name only. In this manner they bear out Benjamin's remark concerning the allegorical intention: "As plummeting figures fall on top of one another, so too the allegorical intention falls into the maze of its groundless depth, jumping from one emblem to another."[12] The body parts in Celan's late work are allegories of the desire for the embodied figures of the geological and astrological poems. The "silent, large and mighty mountains" that von Görres identified as typical symbols represent the finite possibilities of poetry as Celan conceived it in his middle period.[13] In the late work, by contrast, the human body is shown to be an unsuitable vehicle for meaning since it is subject to the passing of time and, by extension, to passing, disappearing.

Notes

Introduction

1. Paul de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor," in *On Metaphor,* ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), 22.

2. Ibid., 23.

3. Patricia Parker, "Metaphor and Catachresis," in *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice,* ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990), 62–64. See also idem, "The Metaphorical Plot," in *Metaphor: Problems and Perspectives,* ed. David S. Miall (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 133–37.

4. Quintilian, quoted in Parker, "Metaphor and Catachresis," 62, emphasis added.

5. See Parker, "Metaphor and Catachresis," 63.

6. The metaphorical nature of the philosophical discourse on metaphor is indeed the subject of Derrida's entire study "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. Alan Bates (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–71.

7. See ibid.; Parker, "Metaphor and Catachresis"; and David E. Wellbery, "Retrait/Re-entry: Zur poststrukturalistischen Metapherndiskussion," in *Poststrukturalismus: Herausforderung an die Literaturwissenschaft,* ed. Gerhard Neumann (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), 200–203.

8. Paul Celan, *Paul Celan: Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden,* ed. Beda Alleman and Stefan Reichert in collaboration with Rolf Bücher, 5 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 1:197 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and in the notes as *GW*).

9. Peter Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt," in Szondi, *Celan-Studien,* ed. Jean Bollack with Henriete Beese, Wolfgang Fietkau, Hans-Hagen Hildebrandt, Gert Mattenklott, Senta Metz, and Helen Stierlin (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 50.

10. Ibid., 52.

11. Ibid., 75.

12. Uta Werner, *Textgräber: Paul Celans geologische Lyrik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1998), 9.

13. I would note that Szondi is at times concerned with the layout of the

poem. A key feature of his analysis is the transition between the various sections of "Engführung," which is organized as a fugue. He pays particular attention to the chiastic order of the words that close the fourth section of the poem and open the fifth. Nonetheless, his primary emphasis remains on the ways in which the work constitutes what it says. See Szondi, "Durch die Enge geführt," 70–74. For a discussion of the transition between sections, see Aris Fioretos, "Nothing," in *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan,* ed. Aris Fioretos (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994), 322–30.

14. Peter Szondi, quoted in Werner Hamacher, "The Second of Inversion: Movements of a Figure through Celan's Poetry," in *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan,* translated by Peter Fenves (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996), 375.

15. Hamacher, "Second of Inversion," 359.

16. De Man, "Epistemology of Metaphor," 15.

17. Ludwig Wittgenstein argues in the *Philosophical Investigations* that all language is by definition public; this includes the language of sensation, which would seem to be private since sensation is always experienced individually. As Wittgenstein shows, however, the experience of sensation is dictated by linguistic conventions that belong not to an individual but to a community of speakers who participate in the same language game. For instance, one can claim to be in pain or to have pain because of the existence of a language game that allows for such a formulation and allows, moreover, for sensation to be construed in such a fashion. See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1968), §§242–73, 88–95. On the problems of the generalizing tendency of language and the way in which it excludes the singular see Rochelle Tobias, "The Ground Gives Way: Intimations of the Sacred in Celan's 'Gespräch im Gebirg,'" *MLN* 114 (1999): 570–82.

18. I have taken the liberty of quoting Peter Fenves's excellent translation of the poem included in his translation of Hamacher, "Second of Inversion," 377–78. Because of a difference in interpretation, I have, however, modified his translation of the last six verses.

19. Hamacher, "Second of Inversion," 378.

20. See my discussion of Kabbalist language philosophy below, in "Stargazing."

21. Hamacher, "Second of Inversion," 379.

22. This phonetic circle helps clarify Hamacher's statement that "Celan's poem, where it comes to itself, is the rhyme, the paronomasia of its an-nihilation." Ibid., 379.

23. The number one thousand, with its echo of the thousand-year Reich, appears throughout Celan's *oeuvre.* See, for instance, the second stanza of the poem "Die Silbe Schmerz" (The Syllable Pain): "Und Zahlen waren / mitverwoben in das / Unzählbare. Eins und Tausend und was / davor und dahinter / größer war als

es selbst, kleiner" (*GW,* 1:280) (Numbers too were / woven into / the uncountable. One and a thousand and what / before it and behind it / was larger than itself, smaller). What Celan calls the "uncountable" (*das Unzählbare*) also resonates with the "unrecountable" (*das Unerzählbare*), a parallel that suggests in turn that the numbers that follow figure the fate of one individual during the thousand-year Reich that the Nazis conceived.

24. I refer primarily to Celan's comments in "Der Meridian," *GW,* 3:189–90.

25. Hamacher, "Second of Inversion," 379.

26. Jacques Derrida, "Schibboleth: For Paul Celan," trans. Joshua Wilner, in Fioretos, *Word Traces,* 11–29.

27. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe writes at length on Celan's critique of mimesis as a form of oblivion or "Selbstvergessenheit," in which the subject exchanges his unique (and finite) existence for the enduring images that language proffers, in *La poésie comme experience* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986), 69–78.

28. Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,* in Heidegger, *Holzwege,* 6th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), 45–56.

Earth Science

1. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 9th ed. (1940; reprint, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), s.v. "augē." Although the German word *Auge* is not usually linked to the Greek and Indo-European root *auge,* the mineral *Augit* (agate) is, which is all the more striking given that this mineral is dark blue or black in color.

2. See, e.g., Homer *Iliad,* bk. 13, line 837, where the light of the sun is referred to in the accusative as the "deos augas."

3. Uta Werner's *Textgräber* is the only full-length study to explore the significance of geological motifs in Celan's work. While I agree with Werner's emphasis on the discourse of the natural sciences in Celan's work, I disagree with her position that the texts themselves enact the geological processes of which they speak. This position, it seems to me, mistakes the nature of a poetic conceit, which requires that a text describe itself by way of something it is not, something foreign to it. Celan's poetry can draw on geological vocabulary because this vocabulary is already figurative. In other words, it is not limited to geological phenomena in its reference.

4. The word lists included at the end of the Tübingen edition of *Sprachgitter* amply demonstrate Celan's familiarity with this volume as well as Roland Brinkmann's *Abriss der Geologie,* 6th ed., 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1940). See Paul Celan, *Paul Celan: Sprachgitter. Vorstufen-Textgenese-Endfassung,* ed. Heino Schmull with Michael Schwarzkopf, in *Paul Celan: Werke; Tübinger Ausgabe,* ed. Jürgen Wertheimer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1996), 109–22 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and in the notes as *TA SG*).

5. Franz Lotze, *Geologie,* Sammlung Göschen, 13 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1955), 72–76.

6. Siegmund Günther notes that geological streaks are "linsenförmige Gebilde" (lens-shaped structures) whose elongated sides reveal the direction of the original flow of magma. Siegmund Günther, *Physische Geographie,* Sammlung Göschen, 26 (Leipzig: G. J. Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1901), 36. Streaks can be porous, thick, or glassy, although the latter is rare. This possibility, though, would seem to inform the poem's later description of the streaks as a "trace of glass / rolled backwards."

7. Lotze, *Geologie,* 73, 76, 79.

8. Ibid., 76.

9. Maria Behre, "Naturgeschichtliche Gänge mit Demokrit und Dante: Paul Celans *Engführung,*" in *"Der glühende Leertext": Annäherungen an Paul Celans Dichtung,* ed. Christoph Jamme and Otto Pöggeler (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993), 169. Among the other passages in the poem frequently said to allude to Democritus are (1) "Orkane, Partikelgestöber" (Hurricane, particle flurry); (2) the lines "das andre / du / weißts ja, wir / lasens im Buche, war / Meinung" (the other / you / know, we / read it in the book / was opinion), in the sixth section; and (3) the word "Porenbau" (a porous wall or structure). See my discussion of Democritus below for an explanation of these terms. Hans Mayer reports that Celan inscribed the following words in his edition of *Sprachgitter:* "'Es gibt nichts als die Atome und den leeren Raum; alles andere ist Meinung.' (Demokrit)" (There is nothing but atoms and empty space; everything else is opinion. (Democritus)). See Mayer, "Erinnerung an Paul Celan," in *Zeitgenossen: Erinnerung und Deutung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 136. The passage is all but a direct quotation from Wilhelm Capelle's translation of Democritus's extant statements in Capelle, ed. and trans., *Die Vorsokratiker* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner, 1935), 399, frag. 7. All citations of pre-Socratic fragments in this chapter refer to this edition, as it is assumed to be the edition Celan used. The English translations I offer are based on Capelle's German translations of the Greek texts.

10. Capelle, *Die Vorsokratiker,* 431, frag. 97.

11. Aristotle makes this claim in *De Sensu,* quoted in ibid., 430, frag. 96.

12. For a discussion of the corpuscular theory of vision among the early Greeks, see David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), 2–9. According to Hugo Magnus, Democritus's principal successor, Epicurus, emphasized the substantial or material nature of the effluence an object gives off. See Magnus, *Die Augenheilkunde der Alten* (Breslau: J. U. Kern's Verlag, 1901), 100–101.

13. Capelle, *Die Vorsokratiker,* 399, frag. 7.

14. Magnus, *Die Augenheilkunde der Alten,* 99. Eduard Zeller summarizes Democritus's theory of vision in a similar fashion in Zeller, *Grundriss der Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie,* 7th ed. (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1905), 70.

15. Capelle, *Die Vorsokratiker,* 436, frag. 113.

16. Ibid., 437, frag. 115.

17. Willy Bruhns identifies glass and gelatin as two rare instances of amorphous, solid bodies in Bruhn, *Kristallographie,* ed. P. Ramdohr, Sammlung Göschen, 210 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1954), 7.

18. The term *Schliere* has prompted numerous interpretations. Dietlind Meinecke claims that it designates residue on a glass flask in chemistry. Joachim Seng claims that it is a term for *mouches volantes,* or "floaters" in opthalmology, that is, particles suspended in the eye's vitreous humor (*Glaskörper*), which the eye sees as specks, stripes, or flies before it, although these particles are hidden behind the lens. Otto Pöggeler likewise argues that the streaks represent an injury to the vitreous humor. Seng reports that Celan suffered from the condition of "Schliere im Aug," although he does not give an exact source for this information, nor does he indicate whether *Schliere* is an idiomatic expression for opthalmological *mouches volantes.* Given the implicit dynamic between the eyes looking into and out of the text, I have chosen to interpret *Schliere* in its most general aspect as a refraction of light that is visible only for a brief instant, until the angle of light changes. It should be noted that the term *Schliere* could be interpreted as either a singular or a plural noun: the plural of the noun *der Schlier,* which refers to the geological phenomenon, and the singular noun *die Schliere* (plural *Schlieren*), which refers to a refraction in glass. I have translated the term in the plural to link it with both the geological and optical phenomena. For further discussion of the poem, see Dietlind Meinecke, *Wort und Name bei Paul Celan: Zur Widerruflichkeit des Gedichts* (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1970), 137–40; Joachim Seng, *Auf den Kreis-Wegen der Dichtung: Zyklische Komposition bei Paul Celan am Beispiel der Gedichtbände bis "Sprachgitter"* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), 204–8; and O. Pöggeler, *Spur des Worts: Zur Lyrik Paul Celans* (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1986), 115, 204.

19. Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), bk. 11, lines 583–91, p. 277.

20. Paul Celan, "Thread Suns," in *Poems of Paul Celan,* trans. with an intro. by Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea Books, 1988), 227.

21. Aristotle, *De Anima,* in *Introduction to Aristotle,* ed. Richard McKeon, trans. J. A. Smith (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 1.2.404a, p. 158.

22. The traditional German designation for the participle is *das Mittelwort* (the middle word), which makes the recurrence of this form all the more striking in the poem, which emphasizes the middle position of the streaks.

23. The thematic of a "sign carried through darkness" must also be read in connection with Celan's statement about the German language in his Bremen Prize speech. There, in one of his most overt references to the Third Reich, which conceived itself as the thousand-year empire, he claims that the language had to "go through [*hindurchgehen*]" "a thousand darknesses [*Finsternisse*] of death-bringing speech" (*GW,* 3:186).

24. Seng, *Auf den Kreis-Wegen der Dichtung,* 208.

25. Empedocles is generally credited with introducing the idea of the four elements—fire, air, earth, and water. These elements derive from the traditional opposites hot and cold, wet and dry. For a discussion of his theory of the elements, see John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (1892; reprint, New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 228–31.

26. Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks,* trans. W. B. Hillis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), 575, n151. Rohde also cites a modern Greek story in which "the Lamia, who guards the water of life . . . 'strikes with a hammer on the rock till it opens and she can draw the water of life,'" which is of significance for the third stanza of the poem. In the poem "Oben, geräuschlos" (Above, soundless) Celan likewise emphasizes the relation of water to life, albeit in a somewhat ironic formulation: "Wasser: welch / ein Wort. Wir verstehen dich, Leben" (*GW,* 1:188) (Water: what / a word. We understand you, life).

27. Capelle, *Die Vorsokratiker,* 146, frag. 73.

28. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duineser Elegien,* in *Rainer Maria Rilke: Werke,* vol. 2, ed. Manfred Engel and Ulrich Füllerborn (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1996), 232, elegy 10, lines 70–79. The English translation is from idem, *Duino Elegies,* trans. C. F. MacIntyre (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1961), 81. I am indebted to an anonymous reader for pointing out this crucial reference.

29. Rilke, *Duineser Elegien,* 233, elegy 10, lines 80–87; *Duino Elegies,* 81–83.

30. Rilke, *Duineser Elegien,* 232, elegy 10, line 69; *Duino Elegies,* 80.

31. Rilke coined the word "Weltinnenraum" in 1914 in the poem "Es winkt zu Fühlung." The opening lines of the fourth stanza read: "Durch alle Wesen reicht der *eine* Raum: / Weltinnenraum." Rilke, *Rainer Maria Rilke: Werke,* 2:113.

32. Brinkmann, *Abriss der Geologie,* 1:150.

33. Ibid., 149–51.

34. These two lines could perhaps be interpreted as an allusion to Heidegger, who famously claimed that the verb *ereignen* (to occur, to come to oneself or one's own) was originally *er-äugen* (to spot or eye, to appropriate). Martin Heidegger, "Der Satz der Identität," in *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske Verlag, 1957), 28–29. It should be noted, however, that this essay was published in 1957, a full year after Celan completed the final version of the poem. If there is a play on the verb *ereignen* in this passage, it more likely stems from Kluge's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch,* in which the verb is said to derived from "*(ir-) ougen* 'vor Augen stellen.'" See the entry for *ereignen* in Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache,* 17th ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1957). This derivation seems to be of greater importance here, where the darkness seen in the eyes is a darkness the speaker had once seen and presumably robs him of sight, in German *Augenlicht.*

35. Joachim Seng identifies this image with the heart, since the verb *pochen* (to beat, pulse) "like no other points to the beating heart as a sign of pulsing life."

While I agree with his position that here is where stone comes to life, I believe that this rejuvenation must be considered in light of the poem's geological conceit, where stone is "beaten through" by rain, so that a stream may form. See Seng, *Auf den Kreis-Wegen der Dichtung,* 205–6.

36. Samples of these word lists are reprinted at the back of the Tübingen edition of the collection *Sprachgitter, TA SG* 110–22. Brinkmann uses the term *capillaries* throughout his *Abriss der Geologie;* see, e.g., 1:12, 13, and 19, where he discusses cracks in rock in connection with seeping or trickling water (*Sickerwasser*).

37. Rohde, *Psyche,* 242.

38. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of "Sein und Zeit,"* trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: SUNY Press, 1996), §57, 255 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *B&T*). German words given in brackets have been supplied by me from the German original, *Sein und Zeit,* 17th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993); the second reference given in the text refers to the location of the bracketed word(s) in the German original, cited as *S&Z.* For the sake of simplicity I have written *Dasein* as one continuous word instead of Stambaugh's hyphenated *Da-sein,* although I recognize the merits of her choice, which underscores Dasein's position or place there (*da*).

39. Ulrich Baer, *Remnants of Song: Trauma and the Experience of Modernity in Charles Baudelaire and Paul Celan* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2000), 233. Baer is to my knowledge the one critic who has pointed out the Heideggerian resonance of the poem's title.

40. Baer's provocative reading of the poem hinges on the ways in which the poem's images anticipate the memorials in Treblinka and Buchenwald, which were built after the publication of the poem. This convergence allows him to claim that the experiences presented in the poem have yet to be relegated to the past: "In its apparent reference to the Buchenwald and Treblinka memorials, which are yet to be built when the poem is published, 'Projection of Landscape' demonstrates that the Holocaust cannot be contained . . . as part of a successfully mastered, and monumentalized, history." Ibid., 248.

41. Ibid., 169–72.

42. See, e.g., Baer's concluding remark: "The fact that these poems [Baudelaire's and Celan's] are anchored in history, then, is also their most ahistorical and elusive dimension." Ibid., 300.

43. Translation from Celan, *Poems of Paul Celan,* 131. Michael Hamburger translates the title of the poem as "Draft of a Landscape." For reasons that will become apparent, I have translated the title as "Projection of a Landscape."

44. Erika Schellenberger argues that the poem traces an eruption in which the interior of the earth is exposed as an exterior. For her there is a mimetic relation between the violence of a revolution in nature and that of a revolution in human history. See Schellenberger, "Von Gletscherstuben und Meermühlen: Geologische Motive in der Lyrik Paul Celans," *Wirkendes Wort* 38, no. 3 (988): 352–53.

45. The terms *Tuff, Tuffbedeckung, Quellkuppen,* and *Staukuppen* appear in the various geology textbooks Celan is known to have read. There is, however, no instance of the term *Quelltuff* in the sections pertaining to volcanoes in any of the following books: Lotze, *Geologie,* 68ff.; Brinkmann, *Abriss der Geologie,* 1:190–200; Günther, *Physische Geographie,* 37.

46. Gerhard Wahrig, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Lexikon-Verlag, 1971), s.v. "Stern."

47. The solitary star that appears at the end of the poem "Engführung," I would argue, also represents such a projection of the Jewish star that Jews had to wear on their garments and that in most cases singled them out for death.

48. Of the textbooks Celan is known to have worked with, Günther's *Physische Geographie,* published in 1901, is the most notable in this regard.

49. Hugo Huppert, "'Spirituell': Ein Gespräch mit Paul Celan," in *Paul Celan,* ed. Werner Hamacher and Winfried Menninghaus (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 319–24.

Stargazing

1. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism,* 3rd rev. ed. (1954; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 52 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and in the notes as Scholem, *Major Trends*).

2. Elke Günzel has determined after careful review of Celan's notes in the margins of his Judaica collection that Celan read Scholem at least from 1957 to 1968, if not before. See Günzel, *Das wandernde Zitat: Paul Celan im jüdischen Kontext* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995), 79–82.

3. Paul Celan, "Night," in Celan, *Poems of Paul Celan,* 123, translation modified slightly.

4. Axel Gellhaus has commented that Celan's poetry does not present a consistent or general concept of time but continually reflects on the experience of time. See Gellhaus, "Das Datum des Gedichts: Textgeschichte und Geschichtlichkeit des Textes bei Paul Celan," in *Lesarten: Beiträge zum Werk Paul Celans,* ed. Axel Gellhaus and Andreas Lohr (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1996), 177–96.

5. For a lengthier discussion of Helmholtz's discovery and how the retina itself can be seen, see Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 215ff.

6. Joachim Seng also has noted that the retina is structured like a "grille," although he fails to see the connection with the "grid of the world" in the third stanza. Seng, *Auf den Kreis-Wegen der Dichtung,* 226.

7. I am indebted to Nikolai Popov and Heather McHugh's innovative translation of this poem in Paul Celan, *Glottal Stop: 101 Poems by Paul Celan,* trans. Popov and McHugh (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 2000), 7, and have borrowed

to some extent from it, although I have chosen to stick with my clumsier translation to draw out certain aspects of Celan's German.

8. See, e.g., Hans-Michael Speier's entry "Erratisch," in *Kommentar zu Paul Celans "Niemandsrose,"* ed. Jürgen Lehmann in collaboration with Christine Ivanovic (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1997), 144–49. James K. Lyon notes the geological significance of this term as well in "Paul Celan's Language of Stone," *Colloquia Germanica* 8, nos. 3–4 (1974): 313.

9. The geologist Siegmund Günther uses the term *Findlinge* to refer to erratic blocks in *Physische Geographie,* 132. In the poem "Allerseelen" Celan uses the term *Findling* in its geological sense, although again the term is applied to stars that are said to be black: "Andere, viele, / ortlos und schwer aus sich selbst: erblickt und umgangen. / Findlinge, Sterne, / schwarz und vor Sprache: benannt / nach zerschwiegenem Schwur" (*GW,* 1:183).

10. Jean Paul, "Rede des toten Christus vom Weltgebäude herab, dass kein Gott sei," in *Jean Paul: Werke,* ed. Gustav Lohmann, vol. 2 (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1959), 266 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as "Rede des toten Christus"). All translations of this work are my own.

11. Bernhard Böschenstein, "Celan als Leser Hölderlins und Jean Pauls," in *Argumentum e Silentio: International Paul Celan Symposium,* ed. Amy D. Colin (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 188. Gershom Scholem likewise claims that Jean Paul was one of only two German authors he brought with him to Palestine in the twenties, which perhaps explains the echoes of Jean Paul's idiom in his account of the Lurianic Kabbalah, discussed later in this section. See Scholem, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem,* trans. Michael Bracke and Andrea Schatz, expanded ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 1994), 146.

12. Bernhard Böschenstein, *Leuchttürme: Von Hölderlin zu Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1977), 171–77.

13. Speier, "Erratisch," in Lehmann, *Kommentar zu Paul Celans "Niemandsrose,"* 144–49.

14. Joachim Schulze, *Celan und die Mystiker: Motivtypologische und quellenkundliche Kommentare* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1976), 105–12.

15. Paul Celan, "Erratisch," in *Paul Celan: Die Niemandsrose; Vorstufen-Textgenese-Endfassung,* ed. Heino Schmull with Michael Schwarzkopf, in *Paul Celan: Werke; Tübinger Ausgabe,* ed. Jürgen Wertheimer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 50.

16. The chapter on Isaac Luria is on pp. 244–86; the section on the breaking of the vessels and Tikkun is on pp. 266–78.

17. I have admittedly compressed two separate moments of the Lurianic Kabbalah, as Scholem recounts it, into one. After the breaking of the vessels, the divine light that continued to flow had to pass through several curtains, which prevented the substance of this light, but not its power, from descending to the lower worlds. The fourth and final curtain is the one in front of the world of Creation,

which was where *Adam ha-Rishon,* the Adam of Genesis, dwelled. Just as *Adam Kadmon* bore the light of all lights, *Adam ha-Rishon* bore the soul of all souls. His soul, in other words, contained the souls of all living beings. Once he committed original sin, his soul split apart into all the souls circulating in the universe as individual sparks. In this regard, the restoration of the world to its original state also involves the restoration of this soul to its original form. Scholem goes so far as to say that the Adam of the Bible "corresponds on the anthropological plane to *Adam Kadmon,* the ontological primary man" (Scholem, *Major Trends,* 279).

18. For a very different interpretation of the allusions to the Kabbalah in Celan's work, see Joachim Schulze, "Rauchspur und Sefira: Über die Grundlagen von Paul Celans Kabbala-Rezeption," *Celan-Jahrbuch* 5 (1993): 193–246. Schulze's insistence that Celan's poetry recounts an ecstatic experience that has nothing to do with the self-reflection of the text unnecessarily limits ecstasy to nonverbal experiences and excludes anything like a poetic experience. In my reading of "Erratisch" I have thus tried to show that the dispersal in question is both cosmological and poetological; in other words, it is of significance for the body represented in the poem and for the poem itself.

19. In three separate dedications Celan identified the addressee of the poem as his wife and the creature born in the final stanza as his son. Yet neither of these identifications exhausts the significance of the feminine figure in the poem, who as the mother of something physical and linguistic must be understood in not only a biographical but also a theological context. The two dedications are printed in Paul Celan and Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, *Briefwechsel: Mit einer Auswahl von Briefen Paul Celans an seinen Sohn Eric,* ed. Bertrand Badiou in collaboration with Eric Celan, text trans. Eugen Helmlé, notes trans. and annotated for the German edition by Barbara Wiedemann, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 1:154–55.

20. A discussion of the linguistic dimensions of the Godhead in medieval Christian mysticism exceeds the scope of what I can address here. Suffice it to say that although the unpronounceable name is not a concern of medieval scholasticism, the Neoplatonic notion of primordial forms is, and like the unpronounceable name, these forms serve as the basis for all creation, which begins as an expression of particular aspects of God's being. Moreover, the conception of the Son as the Word points to a linguistic potential in God that the Son realizes or makes manifest.

21. Fred Lönker, "Mit allen Gedanken," in Lehmann, *Kommentar zu Paul Celans "Niemandsrose,"* 94–98. Elke Günzel also notes the similarities between the addressee and the *Shekhinah,* although she cautions that in Jewish mysticism it is not man but God who has a sexual relation with her. Günzel, *Das wandernde Zitat,* 174. Finally, Joachim Schulze remarks on the parallel between the addressee and the *Shekhinah,* although for him the poem is modeled after Novalis's *Hymne an die Nacht.* The four stages of the path inward in Novalis's text are reflected in

Celan's poem, which he divides as follows: a turning away from the world, an encounter with a feminine principle, a mystical death, and a face-to-face encounter with God that leads to a birth. See Schulze, *Celan und die Mystiker,* 69–74.

22. Gershom Scholem, "*Shekhinah:* The Feminine Element of Divinity," in *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah,* trans. from German by Joachim Neugroschel, ed. and rev. according to the Hebrew ed. by Jonathan Chipman, foreword by Joseph Dan (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 140–44 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and in the notes as Scholem, "Shekhinah"). Although "Mit allen Gedanken" was written in 1960, two years before the original publication of *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead,* there is good reason to believe that Celan read this essay in the *Eranos-Jahrbuch,* where it first appeared in 1953 under the title "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der kabbalistischer Konzeption der Schechina."

23. Elsewhere he notes that the one human who possibly had a sexual relation with the *Shekhinah* was Moses, who the Kabbalists believed was the husband of God, that is, his tenth Sefira, based on a particular interpretation of a passage from Midrash. See Scholem, *Major Trends,* 226–27.

24. My summary of the doctrine of the Sefiroth is based on two texts by Scholem: *Major Trends,* 211–35; and "Shekhinah," 173–86.

25. The emphasis on "alles" (everything) in the second stanza should also be understood as a reference to the cosmos, or "das All."

26. Lönker, "Mit allen Gedanken," in Lehmann, *Kommentar zu Paul Celans "Niemandsrose,"* 96.

27. What is not addressed in this passage is that the word *beginning* is actually preceded by the letter *beth* (in this case meaning "in the"). Although Scholem speaks of the significance of this letter elsewhere, he does not do so in the context of this passage, which raises the question whether *beth* is not one of the signs engraved in the divine aura. See my discussion of the capitalization, or *Großschreibung,* of the adjective "groß" in Celan's text, which itself functions as a mark or point from which the sun can then emerge.

28. It is worth noting that the 613 *Mitzvoth* (commandments or precepts) in the Torah are usually referred to as *Gebote* in German, which is the root for the adjective *gebieterisch,* which I have translated as commanding. Scholem also calls the precepts *Vorschriften,* which is based in the verb *vorschreiben,* which I am arguing is the subtext of this passage in the text, the script that makes this passage possible. See Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik,* 9th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 166–68, 172.

29. Lönker, "Mit allen Gedanken," in Lehmann, *Kommentar zu Paul Celans "Niemandsrose,"* 96.

30. The *Shekhinah* is often identified as God's feet by virtue of her position at the bottom of the Sefiroth hierarchy. The first Sefira, by contrast, is God's crown. See Scholem, "Shekhinah," 177–78.

31. Elliot R. Wolfson, "Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination," lecture given at the forum "Werkstatt für Philosophie und Kunst," Ha'Atelier Collegium Berlin, 10 February 2002.

32. Werner, *Textgräber.*

33. Throughout *The Writing of the Disaster* Maurice Blanchot alludes to the etymology of *disaster,* as in the remark, "Such is the disaster: the night lacking darkness, but brightened by no light." Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster,* trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1986), 2.

34. Katja Garloff, *Words from Abroad: Trauma and Displacement in Postwar German Jewish Writers* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2005), 149.

35. Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage,* afterword by Henryk M. Broder (Augsburg: Ölbaum Verlag, 1996), 20. Although Herzl does not use the word *Luftmenschen,* the term is clearly implied in his comments on poor, homeless, and Orthodox Jews who wander from place to place as opposed to the assimilated Jews of Germany and France.

36. The final poem of *Die Niemandsrose,* "In der Luft," also speaks of a tree for those banished in the air. *GW,* 1:290–91. Throughout Celan's work air is presented as the grave for the victims of the Holocaust. One of the refrains in "Todesfuge" is, "wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng." *GW,* 1:41–42.

37. Scholem uses the phrase "die Versammlung Israels" in German in Scholem, "Schechina; das passiv-weibliche Moment in der Gottheit," in *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit: Studien zu Grundbegriffen der Kabbala,* 4th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 166.

38. The term in Hebrew for Hades is *Sheol.* I have used the Greek term because Scholem does so in the German original of *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead.*

39. Hendrik Birus has argued convincingly that "Hüttenfenster" is in part a response to two works by Johannes Bobrowski, "Pruzzische Elegie" and "Die Heimat des Malers Chagall." He notes that several key words from Bobrowski's "Pruzzische Elegie" also appear in "Hüttenfenster," such as *dunkel, Hütte, Volk, Gewölk,* and *Name.* According to his interpretation, Celan objected to Bobrowski's elegies about his Prussian birthplace on two counts: first, Bobrowski depicts the "peoples of the east—Poles, Russians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Prussians" as victims of the war, without any mention of the Jews or the collaborators in these regions, who aided in the persecution of the Jews; second, Bobrowski tended to mythologize the Prussians through endless apostrophes stressing the pagan roots of the Prussians and their deep ties to the soil. Celan toyed with three titles for the poem before arriving at "Hüttenfenster," each of which Birus sees as a reference to Bobrowski: "Hommage à quelqu'un," "Statt eines Winkes," and "Pariser Elegie." While I agree with Birus that Celan registers his objections to Bobrowski's work in "Hüttenfenster," I do not see the poem primarily as a protest, as Birus does. Even a term such as *Schwarzhagel,* which Birus links to Bobrowski's line "ein Hagelkorn,

weiss," could just as well be seen as a reference to the Goll affair, in which Celan was accused of taking the phrase "Schwarze Milch der Frühe" in "Todesfuge" from Yvan Goll. If the poem is an "hommage à quelqu'un," then the recipient must be conceived of as multiple: Goethe, Rilke, and Brecht, all of whom wrote famous elegies, and the victims of the Holocaust. Finally, the title "Statt eines Winks" must be seen as a reference not only to Bobrowski but also to Heidegger, who made the word *Wink* a philosophical term and whose analysis of dwelling is also alluded to in the poem, albeit with objections. See Hendrik Birus, "Hommage à quelqu'un: Paul Celans Hüttenfenster—ein Wink für Johannes Bobrowski?" in *Hermenautik-Hermeneutik: Literarische und geisteswissenschaftliche Beiträge zu Ehren von Peter Horst Neumann,* ed. Peter Horst Neumann, Holger Helbig, Bettina Knauer, and Gunnar Och (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1996), 269–77.

40. Scholem, "*Tsaddik:* The Righteous One," in *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead,* 127–30 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and in the notes as Scholem, "Tsaddik").

41. See my discussion of Heidegger's notion of "being unto death" in the reading of "Entwurf einer Landschaft" above, in "Earth Science."

42. Sabine Doering traces the history of the debate regarding the authorship of this poem in Doering, *Aber was ist diß? Formen und Funktionen der Frage in Hölderlins dichterischem Werk* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 163–76.

43. Martin Heidegger, ". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . . ," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 221 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and in the notes as Heidegger, ". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . ."). German words given in brackets have been supplied by me from the German original, ". . . dichterisch wohnet der Mensch. . . ," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze,* 6th ed. (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1990), 181–98; the second reference given in the text refers to the location of the bracketed word(s) in the German original, cited as *V&A.*

44. Hofstadter offers this English rendering of Hölderlin's poem in his translation ". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . . ," 219. The original is taken from the German version of Heidegger's essay, ". . . dichterisch wohnet der Mensch. . . ," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze,* 2nd ed. (Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1959), 194.

45. See my discussion of the Heideggerian term *Seinkönnen* in the section "Projection of a Landscape" above, in "Earth Science."

46. Heidegger argues that the poetic image "lets the invisible be seen." ". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . . ," 226.

47. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe argues that Kant's two examples of the sublime in the Third Critique—the Mosaic prohibition of graven images and the inscription at the Temple of Isis forbidding the lifting of the goddess's veil—do indeed bear on Heidegger's aesthetics in *The Origins of the Work of Art,* even if Heidegger

makes no reference to Kant. Insofar as *The Origins of the Work of Art* sketches more fully the notion of unconcealment at play in ". . . Poetically Man Dwells. . . ," Lacoue-Labarthe's insight is pertinent. Unveiling in this essay is to some extent the revelation of a veil. See Lacoue-Labarthe, "Analytique du sublime," *Poe&sie* 38, no. 3 (1986): 83–116.

48. The German is from Georg Trakl, "Ein Winterabend," in *Georg Trakl: Dichtungen und Briefe,* ed. Walther Killy and Hans Szklenar, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1987), 1:102. The English is from Martin Heidegger, "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 194–95.

The Dismembered Body

1. Michael André Bernstein, "In the End Was the Word," *New Republic,* 30 October 1995, 40.

2. Steiner argues that the holocaust motif in *Fadensonnen* is "so cryptic, so private . . . as to be almost undecipherable." In a similar vein he states, "The last poems in *Lichtzwang* are among the most private in literature." And he concludes, "A fair number of the late poems, and some of the greatest among them, depend for clarification on biographical reference." Steiner, "A Terrible Exactness," *Times Literary Supplement,* 11 June 1976, 710.

3. Bernstein, "In the End Was the Word," 41. The poem is autobiographical in at least two senses, if not more. It evokes Celan's experience of modern psychiatry, as well as his experience of modern poetry, insofar as the title is an ironic variation on Hölderlin's "In lieblich Bläue" (In lovely blue).

4. I am indebted to Nikolai Popov and Heather McHugh's excellent translation of this poem, which they call "Out of angel flesh," in Celan, *Glottal Stop,* 70. I have used their translation of "gleich-ewig" as "co-eternal" since it seems the most succinct rendering of a phrase that could mean "similarly eternal," "equally eternal," or "of equal eternity." As "Restseele" has no pithy English equivalent, I have chosen to translate it as "tattered soul." A more literal translation, such as "the remaining fragment of a soul," seemed too wordy. The final line of the poem, "von urher," with its sense of something deriving from a primordial past, is also difficult to render in English. "From the beginning" of the biblical "Beginning" is thus my gesture at an English equivalent. "Beseelung" literally means "to invest with soul," and more figuratively, "to bring to life." As *ensoul,* or *insoul,* was a verb in the seventeenth century, I have chosen to use this antiquated expression here. See *OED Online,* http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00075981 (accessed 10 July 2003), s.v. "Ensoul, Insoul."

5. Scholem, "Tsaddik," 103.

6. Scholem, "*Tselem:* The Concept of the Astral Body," in *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead,* 262 (hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and in the notes as Scholem, "Tselem"). Both Firges and Bleier claim that the poem's title is

consistent with Scholem's account of the *tselem,* although neither shows how this figure is relevant for the poem apart from the title. See Jean Firges, *Vom Osten gestreut, einzubringen im Westen: Jüdische Mystik in der Dichtung Paul Celans* (Annweiler am Triffels: Sonnenberg, 1999), 70–71; and Stephan Bleier, *Körperlichkeit und Sexualität in der späten Lyrik Paul Celans* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 149–50.

7. My discussion of the *tselem* is based primarily on Scholem, "Tselem," 260–66.

8. Freud, for instance, concludes *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* with a reference to Plato's *Symposium.* The idea that man and woman were once comprised in a single entity is consistent with his claim that the sex and death drives aim to restore a prior state. See Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips,* in *Sigmund Freud: Studienausgabe,* ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey, 10 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), 3:266–67.

9. The exile of the *Shekhinah* is linked not only to the destruction of the temple but also to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. For a brief summary of this point, see Scholem, *Major Trends,* 230–39; idem, "Tsaddik," 112–15; and idem, "Shekhinah," 184–86.

10. Franz Josef Molitor refers to the *Tsaddik* in his capacity as an influx as an "Animator, Mover and Guide of the world," which the poem alludes to in calling him "the Animating-Righteous One." Quoted in Scholem, "Tsaddik," 109–10.

11. Scholem discusses the names and positions of the Sefiroth in *Major Trends,* 212–15.

12. Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch,* s.v. "Wurzel."

13. Russel T. Woodburne, *Essentials of Human Anatomy,* 5th ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), 466.

14. Celan scholars have been remarkably bashful when it comes to the sexual imagery in his texts, as the interpretations of the parted crown in this poem demonstrate. In an otherwise sensitive reading of "Aus Engelsmaterie," Simone Schmitz insists that the crown is the first Sefira that is parted insofar as the entire tree of the Sefiroth proceeds from it. She insists on this position even though the speaker and his addressee are said to be "*phallically* / unified in the One" (emphasis added) in the text. See Schmitz, *Grenzüberschreitungen in der Dichtung Paul Celans* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2003), 231–50, esp. 244–47.

15. Bleier, *Körperlichkeit und Sexualität,* 162–65. Bleier's lengthy interpretation of this poem focuses on how the poem rewrites the eroticism in the Kabbalah in light of the Holocaust. In keeping with this aim he pays scrupulous attention to the allusions to Scholem in the text. Given the detail of his analysis on this point, his turn at the conclusion of his reading to general psychology is somewhat surprising. For Bleier, the sister is at once a figure for the *Shekhinah* and the mother of the poet. The incestuous desire he has for her is thwarted by the burning passage from scripture, which represents, among other things, the law prohibiting incest. In his view the

poem weaves together the trauma of history and sexuality. The punitive father of the poem, who allowed the Jews to be killed, is also the personal father who prevents the son from identifying with the mother by castrating her. See ibid., 180–86.

16. Ibid., 163–64.

17. I would suggest that it is also Celan's disparaging comment about his own "Todesfuge" (Death Fugue), which he renounced in part because he felt that it was too popular in Germany and in part because he grew suspicious of its own lyricism. Celan originally considered calling the poem "Todestango" (Death's Tango). A three-quarter beat is the rhythm for a Viennese waltz, which contains the poem implies in speaking of the soul as "herumwälzend" (tossing), which is the root for the name of the dance. The fact that this dance is associated with Vienna, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or crown lands, is registered in the poem as well insofar as the soul tosses and turns in fear of the crown. In some sense "the three-quarter death" implies the destruction of the Jewish community in the former crown lands.

18. Schmitz, *Grenzüberschreitungen,* 240–43.

19. Paul Celan, "Haut Mal," trans. Nikolai Popov and Heather McHugh, in Celan, *Glottal Stop,* 79. I have modified the translation of the first stanza slightly because I believe that the gender of the addressee is more open than Popov and McHugh imply. Also I have changed their translation of "Glied" as "cock" to "virile member," since *Glied* is a proper term, as opposed to slang, and more importantly because it resonates with *Mitglied,* "a member of a group," as well as *Mitgliedschaft,* "membership."

20. Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch,* s.vv. "Haut," "Hode."

21. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings: Poems, Tales, Essays, and Reviews,* ed. David Galloway (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 350–59, esp. 359.

22. In German the word for bile (*Galle*) is usually associated with black bile, *die schwarze Galle,* which was once considered the cause of melancholy. The third attribute of the body, like the others, is presumably black in color.

23. The English translation, modified slightly, is by Popov and McHugh, from Celan, *Glottal Stop,* 56.

24. John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 231–32.

25. *Sidur Sefat Emet,* trans. S. Bamberger (Basel: Victor Goldschmidt-Verlag, 1995), 124, emphasis added.

26. Barbara Hahn explores the significance of this syncretic figure in *Die Jüdin Pallas Athena: Auch eine Theorie der Moderne* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2002), 9–25. She shows that the Greek goddess Pallas Athena turns up with astonishing frequency in the accounts German Jewish women writers give of themselves and in the accounts male writers give of them.

27. Paul Celan, *Paul Celan: Die Niemandsrose; Vorstufen-Textgenese-Endfassung,* ed. Heino Schmull with Michael Schwarzkopf, in *Paul Celan: Werke; Tübinger Aus-*

gabe, ed. Jürgen Wertheimer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1996), 34–35.

28. Marlies Janz, *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie: Zur Lyrik und Ästhetik Paul Celans* (Königstein/Taunus: Athenäum, 1984), 130.

29. Georg-Michael Schulz, *Negativität in der Dichtung Paul Celans* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1977), 124ff.

30. Janz, *Vom Engagement absoluter Poesie,* 130.

31. Schulz, *Negativität,* 126.

32. See Paul Celan, *Paul Celan: Werke; Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe,* vol. 7, *Atemwende,* ed. Rolf Bücher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), pt. 2, pp. 156–57; and the chronology in Celan and Celan-Lestrange, *Briefwechsel,* 2:457–58.

33. Robert Auty et al., *Lexikon des Mittelalters,* 9 vols. (Munich: Artemis-Verlag, 1977–98), s.v. "Köln."

34. Georg Herlitz and Bruno Kirschner, eds., *Jüdisches Lexikon: Ein enzyklopädisches Handbuch jüdischen Wissens in 4 Bänden,* 4 vols. (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1927–30), s.vv. "Memorbuch," "Köln."

35. Celan and Celan-Lestrange, *Briefwechsel,* 2:154.

36. Ibid., 2:115.

37. Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch,* s.v. "Pferd." See also Charleton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary; founded on Andrew's edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), s.v. "paraveredus."

38. Celan closes the 1970 collection *Lichtzwang* with three poems—"Treckschuttenzeit," "Du sei wie du," and "Wirk nicht voraus"—all of which contain quotations from Meister Eckhart's work.

39. Meister Eckhart, "Quasi stelle mutatina" (sermon 9), in *Meister Eckhart: Werke,* ed. Niklaus Largier, text redacted, comp., and trans. Josef Quint, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), 1:110.

40. Ibid., 114.

41. Ibid., 114–16.

42. James K. Lyon, "Die (Patho-)Physiologie des Ichs in der Lyrik Paul Celans," *Deutsche Philologie* 106, no. 4 (1987): 594.

43. These lines are untranslatable, as they are based on similar-sounding words and syllables in German that are not phonetically related in English. I have provided a loose translation to give English readers a sense of the rhythm of the poem. Werner Hamacher emphasizes that *entwo* combines the prefix for negation with the word for "where." The negation of place coincides with the utter paralysis of the word (*Wort*), which is itself eroded in *entwo.* See Hamacher, "Second of Inversion," 379.

44. Celan, *Paul Celan: Werke; Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe,* vol. 7, *Atemwende,* pt. 2, p. 191.

45. Celan and Celan-Lestrange, *Briefwechsel,* 2:459.

46. Adolf Faller, *Körper des Menschen: Einführung in Bau und Funktion,* 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag, 1967), 75.

47. Heidegger, ". . . Poetically Man Dwells . . . ," 226.

48. For an overview of the system of classifying consonant phonemes, see Curtis W. Hayes, Jacob Ornstein, and William W. Gage, *ABC's of Languages and Linguistics: A Practical Primer to Language Science in Today's World,* 2nd rev. ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Institute of Modern Languages, 1977), 36–45.

49. Rainer Nägele, *Reading after Freud: Essays on Goethe, Hölderlin, Habermas, Nietzsche, Brecht, Celan, and Freud* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987), 138.

50. Faller, *Körper des Menschen,* 233.

51. Lyon, "(Patho-)Physiologie des Ichs," 602.

52. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe emphasizes that Celan's critique of art echoes Plato's condemnation of the poets in the *Republic,* although he is quick to caution that for Celan there is no position outside of art; poetry is art's suspension. See Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience,* trans. Andrea Tarnowski (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999), 47–49.

Epilogue

1. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* in *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 336–37.

2. Ibid., 337. "Männlicher Kontur" is his expression in German.

3. Hendrik Birus suggests that Celan knew of Bobrowski's criticism of his poetry through Peter Jokostra. Passages from Bobrowski's letter are quoted in Birus, "Hommage à quelqu'un," 271.

4. Friedrich Creuzer, quoted in Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* 341.

5. This is a variation on Creuzer's claim, quoted in ibid., that one of the requirements for the symbol is "die freiwillige Verzichtleistung auf das Unermeßliche" (the voluntary renunciation of the immeasurable).

6. Peter Szondi shows that this paradox is central to Schelling's understanding of the tragic hero in *Versuch über das Tragische,* in *Peter Szondi: Schriften I,* ed. Jean Bollack with Henriette Beese et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 157–61.

7. Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* 341.

8. Joseph von Görres, quoted in ibid., 342, emphasis added.

9. In a reading of the poem "Zwölf Jahre," Hans-Jost Frey remarks that the dotted line in the middle makes a lost verse visible and preserves it as lost. I am arguing similarly that the marks of erosion imprinted on the landscape draw attention to the fact that something is not there. See Frey, "Zwischentextlichkeit von Celans Gedicht *Zwölf Jahre* und *Auf Reisen,*" in *Paul Celan,* ed. Werner Hamacher and Winfried Menninghaus (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 151–52.

10. Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* 342.

11. I refer here to the poem "Die Zweite," *GW,* 2:146.

12. Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,* 405.

13. Von Görres, quoted in ibid., 342.

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